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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

"VOICES FROM THE SHADOWS"
Women's Self-help Through Street-based Education

By

Rosalind (Van Vliet) Shepherd

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Secondary Education
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
Fall 1992

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "VOICES FROM THE SHADOWS": WOMEN'S SELF-HELP THROUGH STREET-BASED EDUCATION submitted by ROSALIND VAN VLIET in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

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Date: June 24, 1992

"Shadow Voices"

In order to understand darkness we compare it with light;
and to understand light we compare it with darkness.
But in understanding humanity who is in light
and who in darkness?
The rich may think the poor are the ones in shadow;
whites see blacks as being from the 'dark' continent;
the religious feel 'enlightened';
and the educated consider themselves to be 'brighter'
than the uneducated.
Polarizing means we only see in black and white,
good/bad, right/wrong.
But there are so many colors,
so many shades in the rainbow of human behavior.

And what is the meaning of life? Learning?
Learning from each other, from the earth, from our five senses,
and, if we dare, from a multi-sensory dimension.
So we see, feel, taste, smell, and hear as we grow.
And reaching for the multi-sensory levels we intuit,
imagine, envision, create.

This is about hearing voices and filling gaps
in our consciousness,
And travelling beyond the voices to make connections
between others and ourselves.
Feeling the pain, imagining the sorrow, hoping the hopes;
believing in the vision of a better world --
imagining, envisioning, creating.

Women's voices have been devalued;
black women's voices have been less valued;
poor black womens' voices have been obliterated,
buried deep beneath layers of riducule, oppression and punishment.
But what brilliant jewels the words have become during their pressurized
incarceration -- they ring with clarity and color.
No mere black and white, right/wrong, good/bad hues.
Rainbows of perception from the shadow world.

Freedom is in the act of speaking;
justice is in being heard.
Let the world hear and let it respond.
And we will all learn together
to imagine, envision, create.

by Roz Shepherd /92

ABSTRACT

There are many attempts being made to 'help' people of poverty and this thesis describes one such attempt. It is based on female perspective -- voices of women living in extreme poverty who are seldom heard in mainstream society. Their children are called "street kids" and are feared and rejected. Bringing the voices from the shadow into the light of public hearing affords an opportunity for better understanding and firmer solidarity. The purpose of this study is to offer a description of the learning process which took place once voices were released and human spirits encouraged to 'soar'.

This thesis is based on the women's life stories. From their stories comes a plan of action to allow greater freedom, greater responsibility, a wider field of action, and recognition of themselves as valuable intelligent human beings. The concern of the women for their children results in attempts to access the voices of street kids by means of dramatic reconstruction of their daily experiences. Mothers and children learn from hearing their own and each other's voices.

The two partners (Canadian and African) try to answer needs at all levels and for all ages within the community. The task may be impossible, but the attempt creates a sense of making the impossible happen. Hopes are envisioned, then vocalized, then acted upon. Small amounts of money put into the right hand at the right time, combined with plenty of hard work, can transform a dream into a reality. There are plenty of lessons along the way -- mistakes, failures, frustrations -- there is no magic formula. If there is a key it is in setting free the human spirit to imagine, envision, be heard and create a better future.

The documentation of this example of community education may add understanding of international cooperation at a grass-roots level. The voices of women and children can lead overseas aid workers to change their minds. The changes taking place on the globe are enormous. All available human energy will be needed to create new systems to replace decaying ones. The "voices from the shadows" lend insight into the effects of human degradation, yet offer hope for cooperative solutions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Someone said that each person stands on the shoulders of another in order to see over the 'wall'. I feel as though I am on top of an alive and growing totem pole. I have been standing on many shoulders during my work in Africa, my work in Canada, and the writing of this paper. My hope is that there are people who will use this document and elongate the totem pole to infinity.

My parent's shoulders gave strength to risk and love to share; my children's shoulders brought me face to face with my own vulnerability and mortality. I stood on the shoulders of many friends at times during the process, particularly those of Jennifer D'obrenan, Lois Browne and Barbara Cockrall.

During the overseas project work I stood firmly on the shoulders of my African partner (who desires to remain anonymous) without whom all of this would have been impossible.

A remarkable young man, Charles Ngugi, gave his strength and caring to me among many. He took his own life. His death was an expression of the anguish and torment felt by many of us who internalize so deeply the uncessary suffering in slum communities.

Dr. Sandra Ubelacker gave me the initial shove onto the graduate studies pathway, and Dr. Heidi Kass wisely and resolutely brought me back on track (several times). The Canadian Bureau of International Education offered me their shoulder by way of a CIDA Scholarship for the final stage of the research.

During the writing phase I found myself boyued up by someone I have never met, Dr. Michael Bopp, whose doctoral dissertation gave me confidence to say what needed to be said, and whose description of the human spirit inspired me to continue in this task.

The strongest shoulders are also the smallest. It was the courage of the street kids that gave me continued impetus. Their eyes tell their story, and their story is the story of the world. Who is deserving of their trust while the world ignores their voices? And yet they can smile and try again. "While little Esther can carry her rock I can carry mine."* Thank you Esther... This study is dedicated to you.

*A portion of Esther's story appears in Chapter V.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION 1
- A. The Partnership 2
- B. Approaching the Study 3
- C. Purpose of the Study 5
- D. The Need for the Study 6
- E. The Research Problem 7
- F. Delimitations, Assumptions, and Limitations. . . 9
- G. Ethical Considerations 13
- H. Overview 15

CHAPTER II RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 17
- A. Research Timeline 18
- B. Data Collection 23
- C. Searching for an Interpretive Framework 26
- D. A New Age Paradigm 28
- E. My Interpretive Framework 31

CHAPTER III REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE 33
- A.Yin and Yang 33
  - Street Children 35
  - Approaches to Education 37
- B. Definition of Terms 43

CHAPTER IV EXPERIENCING THE SETTING 50
- A. A Tourist Perspective 50
- B. My First Visit to a Shanty 51
- C. Lives of the Women 55
  - Homelessness 56
  - Rootlessness 56
- D. Rural to Urban Migration 58

CHAPTER V HEARING THE VOICES OF THE WOMEN 60
- A. Introducing the Women's Groups 60
  - Wamathina Women's Cooperative 60
  - Kuku Women' Cooperative 61
  - Gikabu Women's Cooperative 61
- B. Ten Women Speak 62
- C. The Imprisoned Member 70
- D. Voices And Patriarchy 73

E. Voices In Retreat 74
Discussion on the train 76
Wambui's story 78
F. The Influence Of Esther 79

CHAPTER VI EVOLUTION OF AN INTERACTIVE PROGRAM 81
A. Needs Identified 81
The Need to Get Together 82
The Need To Speak 82
The Need to be Heard 83
B. Sharing Personal Information 84
C. Building an International Link 85
D. Planning Stages 87
E. Creating A Vision For The Future 88
F. The Project Today 90

CHAPTER VII. STREET BASED EDUCATION 97
A. Setting Realistic Boundaries 97
B. A Philosophy of Street Based Education 98
C. Wholistic Education and the Four Parts of Self . . 102
D. Relief Becomes Development 107
E. The Crafts Program 109
F. An Example of Health Education 110
G. Training For The Project Staff 113
H. Inter-tribal Socialization 114
I. Education of the Researcher 116
J. Education for Canadians 118

CHAPTER VIII. HEARING THE VOICES OF THE YOUTH 121
A. Learning About the Children from the Mothers' Perspective 121
B. Street Children: A Global Problem 122
C. Housing, A Fundamental Need 123
D. Ethics In Street Life 124
E. Effects of Deprivation on Learning 126
F. Creating Programs For Street Children 128
G. Experiments in Learning 132

CHAPTER IX YOUTH DRAMATIZATIONS 135
A. Dramatization Answers a Need 135
B. Benefits of the Program 137
C. Sharing Reality Through Dramatization 141
"The Con Man" 141
"A Maasai Marriage Arrangement" 142
"Alcohol Destroys A Home" 143
D. Impact on Participants 143
"The Brother And Sister" 145
E. Impact on the Wider Community 147
F. Drama as Global Education 148

CHAPTER X REFLECTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS 149
A. The Philosophy Revisited 149
B. Difficulties Encountered 153
1. Initial Expectations 154
2. Dealing at a Distance 155
3. Time Frames 156
4. Tension Within Groups 156
5. Difficulties For Women in Development Projects 159
6. Dealing With Funding Agencies 160
7. Technology 164
8. The Need to be Non-Political 165
9. Religious Freedom 166
10. Entering A Slum Environment 168

CHAPTER XI CONCLUSION 170
A. Answering The Research Questions 170
B. Autobiographical Sketch 173
C. Conclusion 176

BIBLIOGRAPHY 177

APPENDICES
A. The Original Vision 1985 180
B. Project Chart 181
C. Timeline 182
D. Example of a Project Report 184
E. Samples of Partner Correspondence 189

"VOICES FROM THE SHADOWS"
WOMEN'S VOICES IN STREET-BASED EDUCATION

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study is to contribute to knowledge about the dynamics of community development in severely deprived circumstances. This study is based upon the perspective of women in poverty who are outcasts from mainstream society. The self-sufficiency project herein described was co-designed by the author and her African partner to answer the basic needs of squatter families for shelter, safety, income-generation, health services, and skills training. The programs evolved as the project unfolded rather than being pre-determined from the outset. 'Relief' became 'development' once educative processes were put in place. Education in this environment was defined not in terms of mere intellectual instruction but in terms of life skills pertaining to physical survival, mental health and economic viability.

The 1985 United Nations Decade of Women Forum in Nairobi, Kenya, was the birthplace of the partnership between an African social psychologist and myself. We became friends and exchanged ideas about assisting families in distress due to poverty. We recognized the mutuality of our ideas and decided to work together. The initial vision was one of assisting street children. As the enormity and complexity of this task became clearer so did the root causes of social deprivation among children of original peoples. The plight of the parents, and more specifically, the mothers, became evident as a primary reason for the existence of street children. Therefore it was logical to shift the focus from children to mothers. If mothers were helped their children could be cared for in a home setting instead of resorting to the dangers of street life from infancy.

Whereas my African partner was trained and experienced in working with socially deprived persons I was operating on instinct,

my teacher training, and a strong desire to understand the total picture of global inequity from the perspective of those 'at the bottom'.

My own life experiences as a teacher, a mother and a grandmother helped enormously. I could understand the pain of mothers unable to provide adequately for their children, and the maternal fear of losing offspring to the streets. The daily struggle to find an escape from a life of shame and violence was tearfully shared. Their pain became my pain. Why should I be "lucky" while my African sisters were "unlucky?" How might I give opportunities to their children that I had given to my own? I hoped that by listening I could learn to understand, and that by understanding I could learn ways to become a partner in their struggle. The project was a means to channel feelings and hopes into action.

By giving encouragement and financial support from Canada I could enable my partner to set up a counselling service for the street children's mothers. Women in Canada could network directly with women in Africa so that we might all learn. Over five years the plan expanded to include six African women's cooperatives, their extended families, handicapped children, teens, and unwed mothers. Street-based education programs offered skills to empower the women to work collectively, to run small businesses, and to improve living conditions.

Here in Canada traditional crafts created by the African 'sisters' were sold to raise seed money for their self-help projects. Interested Canadians donated money to help. A small agency was incorporated to gain access to government funding. But at every stage the primary resource has been human energy generated in the form of determination, caring, and hard work.

A. The Partnership

Although there are vast differences culturally between the two primary partners, there were similarities in philosophy which

probably sprang from the upbringings and the character types of these two persons. Both partners have a keen awareness of human suffering. Also, each has witnessed the unhappy results of aid programs which become self-serving and administratively controlled by external 'experts'; both persons have had personal experience in systems of domination and exploitation; and both agree that old-fashioned love, empathy, and dignity are required in any effective helping relationship. This type of consciousness is central to the philosophy behind this particular project. It is doubtful whether the project would have proceeded very far without the will (stubbornness) with which each partner pursued the task, the previous experiences in family and community service, and the independent nature of each partner.

The work is also based on a willingness to risk (both in the facilitators and the participants) because change (growth) requires risk. Creative/innovative ideas are encouraged and usually acted upon. There is a trust of intuition and conscience as a guide for action.

B. Approaching The Study

The four main aspects of this study are as follows:

1. Explanation and description of the slum environment and the lifestyle of the women.

2. Explanation of the philosophy behind the methods of community interaction.

3. The stories of women in three groups sharing their reality and their progress.

4. Description of street-based education programs which evolved as a direct result of hearing the women's voices.

Utilizing a combination of participatory research (Comstock, Donald and Fox 1982), feminist research (Maguire 1987) and "new age" research (Capra 1982, Zukav1989, Ferguson 1980) this study attempts to approach the task of describing the process. The task of the researcher is to provide for the voices a forum which

reflects a particular reality in terms which will allow the reader new insights. The researcher has attempted to listen with the heart as well as the ear.

As we approach the year 2000 there are new attempts to understand the power of the human spirit to create change, and to abolish racism, sexism, hunger, poverty. This study deals with these issues by hearing the voices of those experiencing all of the above.

The study is based on a grass-roots approach with intermittent participation by the researcher in the on-site work in 1985, 1987, 1989, and 1991. The method of data collection is designed to be as unobtrusive as possible. Therefore every effort is made to hear the authentic voices rather than impose "scientific" interpretations. In this project the street people educate the facilitators who in turn provide opportunities based on basic needs for shelter, safety, employment, and health. The methods are interactive, care-giving, and intuitive, stemming from personal involvement. It must be admitted that as a trusted friend and co-worker with the women my findings might differ considerably from those of researchers who may not feel as closely connected to the women. This position of trust was due to the intervention of my African partner. Without her as intermediary the solidarity would not have been possible.

When the partnership began in 1985 there were no plans for any type of formal data recording because the project was merely a response to a call for help among a few women. As the cooperative programs expanded the two project partners realized that the methods were actually successful, and that documentation, analysis and dissemination in a wider community might help other projects in other countries.

This document could be defined as the reflective part of the process, while the on-site project involvement comprises the action portion (Friere's reflection/action praxis). This document is a product of the interaction of the two parts of the work.

Extensive documentation was recently deemed beneficial, both as a method of record and as a tool for instructing trainees within the street-based educative programs.

A thesis report format does not lend itself easily to the containment of material filled with the sad reality of people in life and death struggles. It is hoped that the formal boundaries have been slightly 'stretched', and that this written document contains enough of the essence of the work to provide useful ideas for overseas field workers and students of educative group process. Herein only one overseas project is placed under a microscope; however, the issues are global, and the ultimate solutions require much larger 'mega-action'.

C. Purpose Of The Study

The purpose in documenting this project is to contribute to the knowledge of the dynamics of community development in severely deprived communities. The thesis presents ideas for international partnership and group empowerment. The focus is on allowing informal education to evolve as a result of listening to the voices of women and children in poverty. Although this project takes place in a so-called 'third world' setting many of the educational and social dynamics might be applicable to other places where poverty and enforced overcrowding exist.

Special emphasis is placed on the significance of women's voices and actions during the process, and on the spiritual/emotional component which emerged in answer to specific needs. In the past women's voices have seldom been central when community decisions were made. Social and cultural pressures often relegate women to the background, the shadows of so-called important issues. It may not always be the fault of overseas aid agents that the women's voices are not recorded accurately or sufficiently. In most communities in the world, and most particularly in third-world countries, men make the decisions

on behalf of their families and their community. These men may feel capable of defining and describing the realities of 'their' women, but it is time that women be heard. As well, for the first time, women overseas agents are becoming more common. When a woman travels into a foreign community she is more likely to look and listen for messages which reflect the reality for women. We know that men cannot speak our truth for us. A woman's world is very different from that of a man. Therefore this study focuses on that world of women, the world of the shadows.

No deliberate attempt will be made to include the viewpoints of the adult male members of the community except through the interpretation by the women of the men's perspective. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the voices will be heard by men as well as women.

My personal challenge in writing this thesis is:

1. to bring forward the "voices" in a way that reflects the intentions of the women in speaking out, i.e. "Please hear my voice." "This is what my life is like." "Who will help my children?" "Why must I suffer so much?" "Is there away out?"

2. to add to the knowledge about the life-world of women and children living in poverty;

3. to discuss some of the issues surrounding informal education;

4. to tie the plight of street children to that of women of poverty;

5. to give fellow international aid workers some cause to pause and reflect upon: (a) the dangers of hearing primarily male voices and (b) the wisdom and insight to be found in the voices of women and children.

D. The Need For The Study

Projects such as the one described in this study are representative of creative grass-roots efforts by women and

children to interpret their own reality, to value their own ideas, and to explore creative alternatives for survival and development. Such efforts need to be documented, interpreted, and discussed from a variety of emerging perspectives and world views (a) in order to find their way into the academic and professional literature on foreign aid, and (b) to promote greater awareness at a humanitarian level.

This particular project represents a somewhat unusual model for community development. Factors which might provide insight for aid agencies and social service workers from various countries and cultures include:

(a) the location within a slum district;

(b) the wholistic, interactive, feminist approach to the documentation and analysis;

(c) the emphasis on self-sufficiency for women through street-based education and personal development.

This project analysis will contribute to awareness of the pressures on women being 'acted upon' by foreign agencies, and provide a platform for their concerns and daily struggles. It suggests that the 'developees' are the true authorities of their own community and personal development. Hence, the premise arises that, given a 'voice', project participants (recipients) are capable of guiding the development process and evaluating the outcomes according to their own reality.

E. The Research Problem

The major research issues are related to the following questions:

(a) What kind of lessons are learned when women are allowed to articulate their lives?

(b) Can the voices of women, particularly those who have been denied a voice in their society, be recognized as the 'experts' in their own development?

(c) How might we begin to incorporate the spiritual emotional aspects of development into community projects?

(d) What kinds of informal education components might arise within a community development project which is guided by women's voices?

The above questions overlap. The aspects are interwoven, balancing the intellectual approach with a strong humanitarian component. This study is based on the premise that a wholistic view of the political/social/economic environment is necessary for this type of work.

The personalities of the two partners (African and Canadian) are admittedly a key factor in this particular interactive process within the community. The feminist philosophy behind the collaborative approach may emerge as a valuable point of view for international aid agencies attempting to involve women at all levels of decision-making. Presented are descriptions of the interactive process of raising awareness and changing belief systems that results when socially 'devalued' members of a community are afforded opportunities to be seen and heard.

Data and analysis pertaining to these four aspects are supported by the researcher's journal writings describing on-site experiences as well as correspondence and formal reports from the project participants in both countries. Excerpts are presented in the appendix.

Definitions of key terms used in the data are offered in Chapter three, following the review of literature.

The above questions are kept in mind throughout this study and revisited in detail in the final chapter, Reflections and Interpretations.

F. Delimitations Assumptions, and Limitations

Delimitations

The researcher takes the role of observer, documentor, journalist, participant, and project advisor. Verbatim accounts and narratives of activities are central to this study. The researcher contends that the women and children can be considered to be the 'experts' in assessing the extent of impact on their own daily lives. The study, therefore, is qualitative rather than quantitative.

Although six women's groups have been involved directly in the project the number of groups included here is three. These three Cooperatives have been chosen on the basis of their typicality in terms of the slum environment, and their willingness to cooperate in the study. Each group has approximately thirty members. The groups differ from each other in the types of small business activities they utilize for income generation, and in the tribal composition. As well, the capabilities and coherence of the groups differ. The data have been documented and interpreted from interactions during group meetings, social gatherings, and during one-on-one communications.

The research methodology arises from a basis of friendship and solidarity. The relationship of the researcher and the 'subjects' is one of love and respect. Rather than being a documentary report this thesis contains some personal information and shares it in trust so that it becomes a heart to heart communication.

Assumptions

One assumption made throughout this study is that the women's voices, coupled with the observed improvements in their lifestyle, are sufficient evidence that improvements have in fact occurred, since there will not be statistical evidence to 'prove'

economic or social development. Indicators of socio-economic improvement utilized within the project include:

a) a more stable family life

b) income generation on a regular and dependable basis

c) improved quality of living (housing, food, clothing)

d) a wider range of options and choices regarding daily survival activities

e) increased feelings of safety and stability due to the group support system

f) greater independence and self-confidence for decision-making.

The evidence relating to the above indicators is based upon: observed improvements in the health and life-style of families (observed by facilitators, staff, visitors, and the women themselves); verbal reports from the women's groups; and feed-back from individual community members.

English is the language of commerce and education in this case. In group settings it is assumed that the few can adequately, though not ideally, speak for the many, because only a minority of the women speak English confidently. Since only a small percentage of the population have either education or formal businesses, the English speakers often tend to be the leaders and the primary speakers for groups. The interests of the groups' leaders are assumed to reflect the interests of the groups at large.

The English speakers act as interpreters for the non-English speakers. It is also assumed, therefore, that these interpretations are accurate in terms of the desired messages from the non-English speakers. Many of the non-English speakers are able to understand spoken English but lack the confidence to speak for themselves. These women and children can confirm or deny the accuracy of their group-mate's interpretation and make corrections when desired, but out of courtesy will seldom do so in public. It would also be impolite for me to interrogate the women as to their level of understanding of an issue. Therefore I depended heavily on

my partner's guidance of the dialogue process, and we would hold a follow-up private discussion to enhance our understanding of the issues raised by the women. I had many questions about the individual women in each group, their background and their family situation, because their world view depends upon their past experiences.

Limitations

The greatest limitations in this study appear in the areas of scope and bias. I do not presume to know in depth the cultures and belief systems of the women herein described. The researcher has limited knowledge of Africa and its peoples. This study is viewing the situation from the perspective of an outsider who happens to be a teacher and a mother. Therefore the information is biased in favor of women, education and nurturing. This study contends that the women themselves are the only experts of their own development. This study may coincide with the beginning of a global 'coming out' of people from the slums.

There is a definite observation-time limitation in this study. The researcher has worked on-site in the project four times during the six-year time period, each working period being approximately six weeks of intensive involvement. The main data are taken from observations and interactions during the actual on-site time periods. However, the study depends heavily on the participants' voices for descriptions and explanations of any major events which took place between these on-site visits. This could represent a limitation in the study in terms of authenticity and coherence in that some of the deeper cultural understandings may be lacking. Some gaps are filled by the detailed correspondence from the African partner, which outlines the development process and important events. Also regular project reports, and individual assessment reports are considered to be useful indicators of group success or failure. Sample letters and a typical report report are

presented in Appendices D and E.

The analysis of the three main women's groups will be restricted to their involvement in the cooperative activities related to this particular community development project, and how those activities impact on their daily lives. Background information will be included, but only sufficient to enhance understanding of the women's reality within the 1985 to 1991 time period. Certain aspects of their home and work lives are not included in this study for reasons of personal privacy.

Another limitation is imposed by language. Although many of these women understand English they have very little confidence in their ability to converse in this language. However, the women speak openly and freely with the African project director, who translates. The researcher is aware that some subtleties in the women's messages may have been missed (e.g. humor). Certain concepts in English cannot be transferred easily (or sometimes at all) into the African languages. Likewise, the English language has not the capacity to adequately describe certain concepts which arise within the African vocabulary. My African partner has a sophisticated knowledge of language limitations having received her higher education in the West. She is therefore an important source of information about the validity or distortion of spoken information.

For example, often the women's jokes could not be adequately explained to me -- they just were not funny in English. And yet the jokes provided valuable cultural information about the attitudes of the women toward their social condition, and served as an indicator of their frame of mind. Their humor indicated an ability to rise above the sorrow. (I often found myself 'wallowing' in the sorrow, and being taught the lighter side by those most in need.)

Drop-outs from the groups have not been interviewed. The women's groups are complicated organisms and drop-out factors are often social in nature. The drop-outs are usually reluctant to

re-enter the organization to explain their behavior. Therefore explanations by the remaining members are often the only information available. Clearly that perspective would not be unbiased.

Even though the most appropriate data collection methods have been selected they may contain biases when viewed from an academic perspective. Caution is necessary when gathering data: 1) a slum community does not welcome visiting 'whites' carrying tape recorders and cameras; 2) the use of 'technology' can alter the authenticity of the voices, either by inhibiting the process and/or by promoting exaggerations; 3) there is a strong suspicion of outsiders whose motive is 'study' or 'writing' or 'photographing' the daily lives of poor communities; 4) there is considerable risk of violence toward outsiders, particularly if they are carrying anything of obvious value through a slum area; 5) the act of 'data gathering' alters the mind set of a researcher interacting within the community (see Difficulties Encountered [technology] Chapter X).

G. Ethical Considerations

> Development is participatory in that the subjects of the process must engage their own imagination, belief, love, and volition. . . . Paternalism, manipulation and coercion can only undermine that relationship and inhibit the development process. (Bopp, 1985 p.209)

This study is designed to give a forum for the voices of the participants. The intention is to present these voices as indicators of the people's reality, as interpreted and described from within their physical environment. I do not intend that these voices be judged, criticized, or analyzed, but simply accepted as their own reality. The stories were offered in a state of trust and solidarity, and that trust must not be violated. Therefore the names and

places are not revealed. This study has received approval from the Ethics Committee of the Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta.

There are far greater ethical considerations necessary when working with people who are rendered vulnerable due to social stigmatization, geographical distance, lack of education (illiteracy), and lack of access to legal services. The 'subjects' of this study have reported significant benefits from the actual self-sufficiency project, but the potential benefits and/or dangers inherent in this written account of their activities are as yet undetermined in the longer term. Every effort has been made to present a balanced picture that does not point directly at any individual within these groups.

The participants were informed of the process and it's purposes. Their consent has been solely verbal. These are primarily illiterate people, and the written word is often either meaningless or frightening. Even though they are guaranteed anonymity they realize, through personal experience, that foreigners may not be trustworthy. Their stories could conceivably be misconstrued and used against them in certain circumstances. The content may be considered threatening and intimidating to those in authority who want to retain the 'status quo'. This puts a great deal of responsibility on the researcher to protect the participants by screening the information carefully, and making sure that confidentiality is maintained. Hence only observational and verbal information is presented.

Nevertheless, the women are anxious that their stories be heard. These are people who have not formerly been empowered to tell their stories. The theoretical objective in participatory research is the equal partnership of responsibility for information and outcomes. The information is 'owned' by all the partners, and therefore all materials gathered are approved by participants before becoming public information.

The ultimate onus is squarely on the shoulders of the

researcher. Every effort was made to involve the project participants in the research process. The objective is a sharing of knowledge which will ultimately benefit the participants, their children, and their grandchildren.

H. Overview

This thesis weaves a story. The setting is described, the 'characters' are introduced, the voices heard, and the cooperative action evolves from chapter to chapter. Street based education is actually a process of allowing wisdom to be valued and actualized. When specific knowledge is required it is offered in the form of group gatherings in the presence of a resource person. There is nothing mysterious about the process except that the indomitable and unmeasurable power of the human spirit is the fuel of forward movement. This study does not shy away from the spiritual aspect but rather, chooses to focus on it as an important aspect of the Self and as a necessary ingredient in the human growth process.

Chapters I provides introductory information about the the research work, the methodology, and identifies the focus areas of the study. Chapter II includes: (a) a timeline for bothe the project work and the research; and (b) an explanation of the triple framework which determine the perimeters of description for the approach. Chapter III presents a review of related literature and definition of terms used in this study. Chapter IV describes the project setting, the living environment and the psychological setting. Chapter V introduces the three women's groups and presents portions of the women's recorded words. Chapter VI explains the approach, the needs of the participants and the various stages of the project development. Chapter VII looks at the educative aspects of the project and explains some components of street based education. Chapter VIII focuses on the children of the women, their daily lives, and their needs. Chapters IX describes the drama program as a method of "hearing the voices" of the youth.

Chapter X reflects on the study in terms of the new age philosophy and presents an overview of some of the difficulties faced during the five year time frame. Chapter XI answers the research questions raised in Chapter I and concludes with a brief autobiographical message.

CHAPTER II RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

> The question human development research needs to answer is, can that process (decolonization) be effectively sped up through some intervention without inhibiting the execution of the essential task facing developing people; i.e. the reconstitution of a meaning-making system that is whole, integrated, and utterly their own? (Bopp p.73)

This project has been a six-year journey for the researcher. It fulfilled a lifelong dream to learn about diverse cultures, other realities, and to facilitate self-help programs for people in need. From a background in teaching, child-raising, farming, and community work I propelled myself into the world of women of a distant culture. From a teacher's perspective there was enormous scope for learning and growing; from a mother's perspective there were children suffering needlessly; from a woman's perspective there were issues of inequity/oppression/injustice to be understood and dealt with. I needed to be totally involved and to share the stories.

Africa had always had special meaning for me. I was drawn to the rhythm of African drums, fascinated by the diversity of African cultures, and attracted to the soul energy of African peoples. An African student joined our family as a refugee (1980-1985) and taught me how to "think African". During an international conference of The World Council of Churches in 1983 I realized that I would spend the next several years involved in global justice issues. I became involved as a partner in a small project in an African village but only from a distance, and finally in 1985 had an opportunity to travel to the continent in person. I attended the United Nations Women's Forum in Nairobi and there met the woman who is now my African project partner. In 1986 she came to Canada as a keynote speaker on the topic of African Women and this afforded us the opportunity to finalize our plans for a cooperative inter-country partnership.

My partner continued her work with women's groups in Africa while I worked in Canada organizing a small agency formed to support the project. On three occasions after my 'initiation' in 1985 I was able to return to Africa and work on-site in the community with the women's groups and their children (1987, 1989, and 1991) for two or three months, then hurry back to my family and my role as project director for the Canadian side of the work. The on-site times were intense and exciting. My partner and I seemed to be 'on call' day and night in answer to daily crises. During these visits I kept a journal in order to record the process and the methods used. In 1987 we decided that the project should be written as a thesis so that it might be scrutinized by other community workers and utilized as a resource for other development projects.

The most important feature is the recordings of the women's voices to guide the process. Written materials, gathered over the six-year time period (letters, reports, and newsletters) provide a chronology of the progress of the participants. Photographs, slides, and tapes form a visual story of the project.

A. Research Timeline

1985 My first trip to Africa (two months): I attended the United Nations Women's Forum in Nairobi. The objective was to learn as much as possible about the people of Africa and visit small projects in several rural regions. As a member of a thirty-woman America/Africa team I attended a six-day pre-Forum workshop in Mombasa where I first met my future project partner. The workshop consisted of day-and-night presentations and interpretations of the many issues to be raised at the U.N. Forum. We visited and analysed several foreign-sponsored small projects in various environmental settings.

We returned to the city of Nairobi to take part in the

week-long Forum. I was overwhelmed by the size of the international gathering (14,000 women) and the vast array of issues brought forward -- i.e. poverty, militarism, agriculture, health, education, birth control, gender inequities, wife beating, infanticide, female circumcision, breast feeding, prostitution, female spirituality, mental health, music and art, media images, etc. There seemed to be major breakthroughs in facilitation methods. For example in the Peace Tent there was a rule that no political statements would be allowed. We learned to function within a new non-political framework. 'Heart' became more important the 'head'; 'spirit' overruled 'mind'. (It was a relief to realize that the Women's Forum section was totally separate from the simultaneous official government U.N. Conference where political delegates [primarily male] debated about policy and status.)

After the Forum our African-American group travelled on Safari into the Game Parks. We were able to see the famous safari animals and visit the homes of Maasai villagers anxious to sell their beadwork. These people were poor, but proud of their traditional lifestyle and their tribal wisdom. There were obvious differences between urban and rural living. The issue of rural to urban migration was a major topic of debate.

As female teachers we were concerned about the issue of global poverty, it's root causes and the effects on women and children. We asked to see slum areas but the exposure was from a safe distance. We could see the problem, discuss the issues, and debate solutions, but the discussions were rather theoretical and academic because we lacked the real experience and first-hand exposure.

1986 My partner travelled to Canada where we developed a plan of action and pledged ourselves to a long-term commitment in

working for and with the women and children of Shadow Valley. She had met several times with each of the three women's groups registered as cooperatives. They had begun their process of understanding their role as self-supporting groups and identifying their needs as individuals and as collaborators.

My partner and I utilized a process of imagining possibilities, clarifying a common vision, and then discussing alternative approaches. It was decided that we would follow the women rather than lead -- their courage to risk and their spirit of adventure would fuel the journey. However, we needed to concretize the dreams to apply for necessary funding. In Africa we were dealing with people who kept all the information "in their heads"; in Canada people depend on "documentation". Transferring dreams and possibilities onto paper became my primary function. I visualized a building for street based learning, health programs, and emergency relief. (Appendix A The Original Vision)

1987 Second trip to Africa (two months): By now we had some donated funds and a large amount of 'fuel' (human energy in both countries). My tasks during this visit were as follows: (a) to take supplies; (b) to establish a building to be used as a learning centre and emergency shelter; (c) to observe the groups and hear the voices; and (d) to assist my partner in her daily work with the various groups, individuals, and families.

I found myself dealing with issues such as imprisonment, lack of health and education services, and the violence of street life. I saw poverty as I had never witnessed it, and courage beyond measure. Each day was filled with explosions of consciousness as I was taught about life 'in the shadows'. My journal writings were emotion-charged as I dealt with my own feelings of anger, inadequacy, admiration, frustration, joy and sadness.

We found a building under construction which would be adequate to house emergency victims and accommodate learning programs. A three-year lease was negotiated.

Meanwhile my partner and I discussed at length our philosophy of service and long-range goals for encouraging self-sufficiency. The women would be our teachers in wisdom and we would in turn provide opportunities to gain the skills they desired. Since their primary concern was for the well-being of their children (the street kids) it would be necessary to include all ages in the project, and view the slum community as an integrated whole -- what affects one member of the community affects all.

1988 The project had become a full time unpaid job for me. Here in Canada I was researching every aspect of overseas aid projects and gathering support for the project. Curriculum materials and audio-visual presentations were prepared and offered within schools and community groups. Reports and proposals were constantly in demand from government agencies. Financial planning became more complicated as the project grew. Suddenly at the project site there was a sewing program, chicken projects, market gardens, small businesses, street kids camps, and even a program for disabled children. Local people were hired as community outreach facilitators.

1989 Third trip to Africa (two months). My tasks were: (a) to take supplies from Canada; (b) to implement improved record-keeping system; (c) to observe street kids drama program; (d) to facilitate children's camps and women's leadership training; (e) to assist in all aspects of the program; and (f) to report back to donors and funding agencies in Canada.

There had been great strides within each of the women's groups. They had expanded their activities and improved their

lives. One group was now self-sufficient by selling chickens, eggs, and chicken manure. The emergency shelter building was being used to capacity and construction of a second story was planned. Additional staff persons had been added. The youth leadership camps were now monthly events, and the youth's dramas were highlighting the program. These dramas proved to be therapeutic for the children and valuable learning experiences for the wider community.

My partner and I were invited to attend the World Conference of Curriculum and Instruction in Holland. Six of the street youths accompanied us and entertained the conference by performing their dramas, songs, and dances for the delegates. This confirmed my faith in the youth to perform at a high level and instruct others by means of their unique methods of dramatic communication.

1991 Fourth trip to Africa (three months). My tasks were: (a) to complete my data collection and gain approval of this thesis from the participants; (b) to implement an effective phase-out process and confirm self-sufficiency; (c) to meet with all staff personnel, women's groups, and youth groups to discuss future directions; and (d) to compile reports for Awareness Progams Society and government funding agencies in Canada.

At this time the project is under immense stress and serious disruption due to political upheaval. Important learning experiences occurred for me regarding street violence, the effects of fear, the oppression and aggression within a police state. This situation has expanded my consciousness and altered my opinions of overseas aid, international interference, and the dangers of military intervention.

B. Data Collection

The collection of data was undertaken as an integrated part of the actual project work. Besides providing the basis for this study, the purposes of data collection were: (a) to allow the women to hear their own ideas and value each other as a support group; (b) to utilize written materials in a training program for staff and volunteers at the Emergency Shelter; (c) to increase my own understanding of the issues by analysing the words and ideas of the women; (d) to inform Canadians of the issues of poverty as it relates to our lifestyle; (e) to allow Canadians to see and hear how their assistance is helping others.

Personal hand-written journals were written late at night, recording major daily events. Photographs were taken on a small camera, and an album made for the benefit of interested Canadians. The photo albums now provide a visual record of the actions and activities in the development of the group programs. A cassette tape recorder came into use during meetings and gatherings. The photos were combined with the recorded voices to create slide presentations to raise awareness in Canada and to explain the facets of the project. The recordings and written journals, combined with project records, newsletters and correspondence, provide the primary data for this thesis.

The written and recorded data was originally a personal diary, and used later as a teaching tool. When the tape recorder was introduced the women and children were excited to hear their own recorded voices. They began to realize the value of their own words and opinions, and to think about the issues they themselves were raising. Hearing themselves seemed to increase their self-confidence. And they were pleased that their words would be heard by people in other countries.

Using 'modern technology' such as the tape recorder may have been a mixed blessing. At times, it probably inhibited some people and caused others to speak in excess. It impressed some of the

women and intimidated others. They were amazed when they heard their own voices played back. I used it sparingly but it assisted me tremendously in recording the real voices.

As time went on the data became more 'solid', as several individuals and agencies requested written materials to explain the 'techniques' we were using. It was indeed difficult to document our methods in terms of 'techniques' because so much of it is based on intuitive, spontaneous or spontaneous responses. The 'soft' data was difficult to document in academic terms. It is a question of what constitutes knowledge.

> The conscious awareness of what human beings will become or might become is a category of knowledge that does not gain admission under the legitimatizing shadow of the cartesian world view which now dominates western scholarship. Such knowledge is consigned the epitaph of "fluff" or more politely, "vision", "mysticism", "imagination" -- but certainly not "knowledge". (Bopp p.5)

If the voices 'touch' us the knowledge becomes not merely informational but internalized. The scientific, philosophical, and spiritual begin to meld. (refer to Chapter 10, The Philosophy Revisited #5)

The voices spoke during meetings and workshops, but also during meal preparation, gardening, tending the chickens, and washing the clothes. Before I could hear with understanding I needed to enter their world, move to the rhythm of their daily lives (Bopp, 1985). This proved to be difficult because of the risks involved in being within the slum area (see Difficulties Encountered Ch. 10). Observation and discussion were the main methods of gathering information while visiting the women's houses. Cameras and tape recorders would draw attention and suspicions. Movements of strangers within third world slums are monitored by

'under cover' persons of all ages. It was a privilege therefore to be taken into confidence within this environment. Even though I could not stay for extended periods of time I visited the women's homes as often as possible because (a) I wanted to be visible to the community (b) I found it exciting and stimulating to be within the community, (c) the women wanted me to see and understand their daily world, and (d) I wanted to interact with the children and teens.

At each meeting the participants were given opportunity to speak. Some chose to tell of their life experiences, giving me a sense of the path from rural to urban living, from childhood to grandmotherhood, and from tribalism to capitalism. Sometimes a woman chose to describe a particular aspect of her daily life, a health problem, or a specific crisis situation. Or the topic might be a community problem, such as rainy season floods, food shortages, arrests, or alcoholism. Education was always a popular topic, the main problem being the cost of school fees for their children.

I used my own observations as a basis for the journals; the women's taped voices as reports of meetings; and official project reports from overseas staff. The children and youth expressed many of their ideas and concerns during discussions at the Saturday programs and weekend camps; and their dramatizations depicted many real-life stories, re-created in mime, dance, and plays. As well, there was ongoing correspondence between the two project partners describing both successes and set-backs, joys and despairs during the five year evolution of the programs. A comparatively small portion of the information can appear in this report, but the 'essence' can be found in this descriptive study.

Data was selected for inclusion in this report by considering the following: (a) the need to overview a six-year period of work; (b) inclusion of both African and Canadian perspectives; (c) balance of humanitarian and scholastic information; (d) anonymity of the participants for reasons of safety; (e) promotion of understandng of the basic issues presented by the voices of the women.

C. Searching For An Interpretive Framework

In the beginning I had adopted participatory research as a description of the approach. It has since evolved to include aspects of feminist research approach, and finally beyond that to incorporate the new age paradigm (Capra [1982] The Turning Point, Ferguson [1980] The Aquarian Conspiracy, and Zukav [1989] The Seat of the Soul). The nomenclature 'new age' is not to be confused with any type of religious connotation, but rather as a wholistic approach to both the data collection and the project work. It is a way of thinking, interacting, and working in harmony with the environment (social and ecological). There is a tolerance of diverse thinking; change is seen as positive; intuition is considered legitimate; and personal responsibility for one's actions is encouraged (see D. A New Age Paradigm).

The process of incorporating three research approaches involved looking carefully at participatory research, thence to the feminist research definitives, and finally the new age materials. Viewing the situation from a variety of perspectives adds depth and widens the framework to include multiple dimensions of understanding.

While attending the Participatory Research Conference held at the University Calgary in 1989 I adopted certain ideas arising from the various presentations. Participatory research involves a combination of three activities as a collective process: investigation, education and action. The objectives of participatory research are also three-fold: (a) development of critical consciousness of both researcher and participants; (b) improvement of the lives of those involved in the research process; and (c) transformation of fundamental societal structures and relationships.

All three activity areas seemed appropriate for my research process. However, (c) above, "transformation of fundamental

societal structures", was not an objective of the project. Furthermore, our process and our objectives were pursued from a female-centred consciousness. The "investigation, education and action" involved women helping women, women helping each other, and women helping themselves. Although there are men involved in certain aspects of the project (as staff, community volunteers, administrative advisors, and indeed as 'minority' recipients) the major decisions are made by women. Incorporated in the approach is the recognition and development of emotional and spiritual aspects of being female.

Patricia Maguire, in Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach, (1987) points out that most participatory research writings exhibit androcentric tendencies. She pinpoints the strong gender bias in her chapter IV entitled *Participatory Research: Another Male Monopoly? Acknowledging the Androcentric Filter.* In this chapter she describes seven "indicators" of androcentrism in participatory research: 1) male-centered language; 2) women's unequal access to project participation; 3) inadequate attention to obstacles to women's participation in projects; 4) women's unequal access to project benefits; 5) unsubstantiated generalization of the benefits from primarily male projects to women; 6) absence of feminism from theoretical debates on participatory research; and 7) exclusion of gender issues from participatory research.

She describes the differences between participatory research and feminist research as being: objectivity vs. subjectivity; distance vs. closeness to subject; universality vs. uniqueness; social control vs. local self-determination; and impartial advice vs. solidarity and action. Finally Maguire comes to a blending of the two by 'inventing' an approach she calls feminist participatory research. She describes feminist participatory research as a wholistic process of involvement and understanding. There is a strong focus on building trust and on collective decision-making.

Maguire's courageous study of abused women has helped me to clarify my research direction, and has encouraged me to stretch the

boundaries of traditional research methods by presenting the participants as the 'experts'. However, Maguire's feminist participatory research seems to insist that gender issues be the focal point. Various African women had expressed a desire to avoid the 'feminist' label. They feel that the American road to equality is different from what the African road will be. Had I insisted on a concentration on equality, women's rights, etc. it would have been oppressive within these groups. Although they do express discontent with male domination and social patriarchy they choose not to deal specifically with those issues at this time. They need to choose their own style of change.

I contemplated once again the essence of the work, and the need to write an academic thesis report which considers the intimate lives of people of poverty, while introducing education programs for self-help. Participatory research combines investigation, education, and action; feminist research involves the daily reality of women's lives; yet I needed an additional research framework to enfold the concept of totality, of encouraging personal wholistic growth, of trusting intuition, and incorporating spiritual development. I decided to take a look beyond the feminist participatory research model into the 'new age' paradigm explained by such writers as Capra (1982), Ferguson (1980), and Zukav (1989).

D. A New Age Paradigm*

The essence of new age thought seems to me to be the reconnection of humans with the universe they are in the process of creating. The basic belief is that all things are connected and all people are connected. That means that one person's joy is the joy of all, one person's pain is the pain of all. This leads to responsibility for the nurturing of each other and of the world environment.

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* See also definition of new age research Chapter III C. and The Philosophy Revisited Chapter X.

According to new age writers (Capra, 1982; Zukav, 1989; and Ferguson, 1980) we are destroying ourselves with the 'old' technology mode. Therefore old societal systems are collapsing and other ways of interacting are required. 'Old' systems include government systems (which now control most international aid projects) and educational systems (which control teachers and children).

Presented here is a synopsis or short-list of new age premises utilizing ideas from the above authors.

1. There is a new social era arriving. Old methods and systems are obsolete.
2. Life is continual learning; learning is risking to think and create; it is through change that we grow.
3. We can learn to trust our own knowing. Intuition is trustworthy and results in creativity and innovation.
4. We can take responsibility for our own health and actively participate in our own physical, mental, emotional and spiritual healing.
5. Religion, metaphysics and science are blending together. Spirituality has a more practical and personal meaning to each individual.
6. Values are shifting away from material goals. Inner power is being sought rather than exterior power.
7. All things are connected. Reverence for all forms of life and care of our ecology is a continual responsibility.

(An expanded explanation of the new age model in respect to the work is provided in Ch. X A. The Philosophy Revisited)

Michael Bopp, in his doctoral thesis entitled, Education For Human Development (1985) states that there is now a process of world transformation:

> I believe that the tumult we are experiencing around us . . . is in essence, the birth pangs of a new world order. . . (which) emerges as human beings step into the driver's seat of their own individual and

> collective evolution: a revolution of the human spirit. (pp. 15,16)

Bopp describes his experiences with the native Dene peoples and the people of Rwanda as an 'awakening' for himself to the 'awakening' process of original peoples worldwide who have been 'asleep' to their own power and potential. His new age philosophy carries through into his way of being within the 'world' of people of other cultures:

> The entire life pattern of a culture is expressed in large rhythmic strokes, and is related to that culture's unique relationship with the universe. I have stated that the foundation of a human development research process is an empathetic immersion in someone else's world.
>
> I have often noticed, in interactions with native people . . . that my entire rhythm pattern seems to change. The spaces between thoughts widen. The gestures soften. Even my breathing is somehow taken over by the compelling need to synchronize with the person I am interacting with. (p. 46)

Bopp describes this process of "being" within a cultural group as absolutely necessary if an integration of understanding is to occur. Unless the researcher can "let go" of his/her own cultural patterns in favor of those of the group there is "communicative schizophrenia" (p.47) .

Another premise of the new age thinking is the interconnectedness of all systems, and all peoples (#7 above). What affects one affects all. Through a sense of community and collaboration shared knowledge becomes empathetic and mutually beneficial. According to Bopp:

> I have come to realize that the entire planet is "underdeveloped". The well-being or the destruction of any people is inseparable from the well-being and

> destruction of all of us. . . . There is emerging, however, a new breed of scholars to whom knowledge is not power, but empathy. The outcome of this knowledge is collaboration and community. It is a knowledge based in mutuality; in the conjunction of entire universes of meaning. (p.84)

Bopp believes in a mutually transformative process. He recognizes that his interaction with other cultures changed him drastically and at the same time changed those with whom he was interacting. He describes this mutual transformation, the "richer articulation of our humanness" as a legitimate basis for all human development research (p.85).

Not only is this framework appropriate for the street-learning curriculum, it also fits the method of data collection, and the content of the data itself. This interpretation colors the method of listening, the message heard, and the mode of documentation. Intuition, change, innovation, risk, healing, spirituality, simple living, and ecological responsibility are the building blocks of our actions within this project and underpin the way in which data was collected and presented.

E. My Interpretive Framework

Within the research methodology and the project work itself (it is difficult to draw a line between the two) there is a universal theme, a humanitarian base, and a spiritual component. Certain portions of the new age materials (Capra, Zukav, Ferguson) most closely describe the philosophy of our work and the methods of describing the experiences (the research).

The new age label may not presently exist in formal research definitions, but it feels comfortable for this wholistic project because (a) it recognizes the intuitive as legitimate, (b) it values each human being for his/her inherent wisdom, (c) it encourages individual and collective responsibility for moment-to-moment

creation of our human reality, and (d) it is based on freedom rather than control.

The research process recognizes the wealth of experience and knowledge brought into any group situation. The motivation of the researcher is based on the desire to 'be', i.e. fully present and 'at one' within the particular social environment.

There is respect for the 'knowing' of others and conscious effort to avoid imposing my 'knowing' on anyone. My 'truth' may be different from another's 'truth' because, although we are connected, we are on separate paths in order to learn our own life lessons. The women of Shadow Valley are the 'experts' of their 'knowing' and therefore of their own growth and development. They may not know the answers to my questions but they know the answers to their own questions, so their own questions and answers are what the researcher needs to hear.

CHAPTER III REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

> We are not liberated until we liberate others. So long as we need to control other people, however benign our motives, we are captive to that need. But giving them freedom, we free ourselves. And they are free to grow in their own way. (Ferguson, 1980)

Three ideas which arise from such authors as Capra (1982), Gilligan (1988), and Ferguson(1980) are: (a) that there is a major global paradigm shift in process, (b) that women's world view is central to that evolutionary process, (c) that women do in fact have a way of seeing and being which is different from men. This study offers an opportunity to hear from women who are at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy, and that makes their voices all the more valuable as the world strives to understand a new set of socio-economic dynamics.

The above premises explain the need for women to form supportive networks, locally and globally; they identify the urgency of cooperative action for global change; and they illuminate the connections between grass-roots development and international awareness.

A. Yin and Yang

The philosophy behind the Shadow Valley project includes a belief that the world is over-balanced in favor of 'yang' and that the balance should and could be changed to give equal emphasis to 'yin'. However, yang activity is not exclusive to males, nor yin the domain of only females. Either gender is capable of choosing either way of 'becoming'.

Fritjov Capra insists in "The Turning Point" (1982) that there is a massive shift happening at this time in history. He agrees that there is a feminine way of being which should be recognized and encouraged. He compares the masculine and feminine modes in terms of the Chinese yin and yang:

> . . . yin can be interpreted as corresponding to

> responsive, consolidating, cooperative activity; yang as referring to aggressive, expanding, competitive activity. Yin action is conscious of the environment, yang action is conscious of the self . . . one could call the former "eco-action" and the latter "ego-action". . . . rational knowledge is likely to generate self-centred, or yang, activity, whereas intuitive wisdom is the basis of ecological, or yin, activity . . . our society has consistently favored rational knowledge over intuitive wisdom, science over religion, competition over cooperation, exploitation over conservation. (p.38)

The "intuitive wisdom" mentioned by Capra seems evident among these women of the world's slums. During my time there I was continually struck by their selflessness, their compassion, and their generosity. Their voices are capable of teaching 'yin' lessons by sharing their knowledge of life gained through hardship. Their lives are a mirror to us. It may be painful to look in that mirror because our lives and theirs are intertwined. Women globally are feeling the need to work together to retain and hone their 'yin' wisdom, particularly at this time in history.

There is a realization that the strong patriarchal institutions have discouraged cooperation in favor of competition. Capra describes our patriarchal system as follows:

> The power of patriarchy has been extremely difficult to understand because it is all-pervasive . . . . It is the one system which, until recently, had never in recorded history been openly challenged, and whose doctrines were so universally accepted that they seemed to be laws of nature; indeed, they were presented as such. (p. 29)

Prior to colonial rule many African tribes valued women as healers and leaders. Since colonialism the voices of African women have been seldom heard, and often at great peril to those who did dare to speak their truth.

African women such as Christine Obbo feel that their society has been conditioned to believe unquestioningly in the sanctity of 'man-power'. She claims that the lived experiences of mothers, wives, daughters, and grandmothers have been devalued. In her book, "African Women" (1980), she describes the distortion caused by the anthropological gender bias:

> . . . anthropology as a whole has provided an essentially male view of Third World societies. While this ***is*** a correct reflection of male dominance in the societies studied, it not only threatens to give an account of only one half of the world, it also transgresses the anthropological ideal of letting the people speak for themselves, especially in situations where the establishment denies them the right. . . . Male reality tends to be presented as equivalent to the whole group's reality. (p. 2)

While it is true that male voices are still primarily heard worldwide there is a group that is heard even less often than women -- the voices of children. I began this work hoping to understand and impact the world of the street child. Although the focus is now on helping the mothers, their children are also involved in the programs.

Street children

The mothers grieve continuously over the fact that they cannot prevent their children from resorting to the street life. The street child phenomenon is a global problem of enormous proportions. Peter Tacon, Director of Childhope, is quoted in the August 16, 1987 edition of the Edmonton Journal as saying,

> "These children are prophetic by their very existence - prophetic of what will happen to our race if we do nothing to work with them, prophetic of the depth of human despair and suffering that can result from selfishness and greed. At the same time, they are

> prophetic of a wonderful new world that can be had if we lend a modicum of dignity and respect to their lives."

Susanna Agnelli, in Street Children: A Growing Urban Tragedy (1989) estimates that there are thirty million street children. She describes these children as the "end-product of a long chain of innumerable causes and effects" and offers no simple solutions. She admonishes that the national and international level of public awareness must be raised. "Public opinion and official attitudes are indifferent or hostile, bureaucracies lethargic, and resources derisory".

Agnelli feels that governments should be pressured to release human and economic resources to provide basic needs of shelter, safety, education, and family security. But Capra and Friere might insist that only major shifts in attitudes and priorities will end the suffering of the world's children.

In reality street children are the product of the plight of their mothers. The mothers cannot afford formal education. Street-based training programs may be one part of the solution. Dealing with all age levels and primarily illiterate adults, innovation and experimentation is required.

The children need a chance to hear their own voices, then see the connections between their 'world' and the larger world -- going beyond seeing and hearing to imagine, envision, and then create a new reality for themselves. Their voices are not heard within this study in the same form as the voices of their mothers and grandmothers, but instead in the form of communication called drama. Their dramas are created spontaneously, derived from their own real experiences. Unable to vocalize their daily lives, these children instead act them out, using mime, humor and ad lib dialogue to express a full range of emotions in their stories. This is a form of self-education. Arising from these dramas come the values and issues discussed in the organized groups.

When the time comes for a change (as it is globally at

present) the young become the change makers. So the young need 'tools' for change, ideas based on a clear vision of their reality, and the possibilities within that reality. For street children those ideas can come from strengths and insights gained from living so close to birth and death; from seeing injustices such as hunger and violence; and from the realization that these things can be replaced by something else.

Approaches to Education

Paulo Friere (1979, 1983,1989) revolutionized international education by speaking out with courage against the systems which have historically controlled and exploited third world peoples. His 'oppressed' were identified as those without basic human necessities, personal power, resources. Friere's argument is that although the power may not be there individually, through 'conscientization' (awareness of personal reality) and collective action, shared power may be attained.

The six-year project in Shadow Valley has been built on a philosophy very similar to that of Friere in that the researcher is primarily an agent of empowerment and change, in solidarity with the women and their children. Friere's solution for the oppressed lies in a combination of reflection (conscientization), and action - - the two parts of the praxis interacting, overlapping, and bringing about a new consciousness, and eventually a new reality. The reflection/action process is guided and mediated by the 'leaders' (educators) who must be in sincere solidarity with the people, through love, trust, and devotion to their cause.

However, I would like to critique some of Friere's ideas in terms of working with women. Friere's pedagogical method is based on a process of dialogue, leading to critical consciousness, followed by reflection, and resulting in change (action). It seems to be based on a male-oriented mode. Friere may have had little access to female input during his work.

A female-oriented process would in addition include intuitive

insight and empathetic awareness. In other words there would be a care-based ethic involved, in addition to the justice base. Carol Gilligan, in her collection of research essays called, Mapping the Moral Domain (1988) contends that males and females have differing modes of ethics. Generally, though not exclusively, the female code of ethics is 'care-centered' whereas the male mode is 'justice-centered'. The former involves connection, care, and response; while the latter involves reciprocity, justice, and rights. Neither mode is gender specific, but rather gender is related. Gilligan contends that there are differences in moral reasoning tied to differing ways of seeing oneself "within relationship".

Gilligan's findings would indicate that women's groups would require a care-giving dimension in community development work. Care-giving should be counted as a legitimate motive for action, but also as a legitimate objective of labor. This is an important insight into valuing altruism, and the selflessness so often devalued in patriarchal terms.

Within this project the women's discussions emphasize caring for each other and for their children, then for their community. They want for themselves modes of learning which would allow them to give their children a better life, and they want to learn quickly because their time is precious when daily pressures are so great. But there is very little confidence in their own ability to learn. Whereas they do not consider themselves 'worthy' of formal education, they feel that their children are. For their children they prefer formal education. It is a strong status symbol. There is an unquestioning belief in the classroom as the answer to all problems -- school leads to employment and employment is the exit door from Shadow Valley. However, they don't realize that formal education is a way of perpetuating the very system which recreates the gap between rich and poor.

According to P.M.Todare, author of Economic Development in the Third World. (1977) ". . . the educational systems of most developing nations act to increase rather than to decrease income

inequalities." (p.254) Furthermore he accuses the imposed European/Western form of education of being not only ineffective, but dangerous.

> The principal institutional mechanism for developing human skills and knowledge is the formal educational system. . . . All countries have committed themselves to the goal of 'universal' primary education in the shortest possible time. This quest has become a politically very sensitive, but often economically costly 'sacred cow'. (p. 236)
> . . . Clearly something is seriously wrong with a primary and secondary educational system modelled upon its counterpart in economically advanced societies and transferred to an environment to which it has little if any relevance.(p.242)

Education at the primary level is "free" in many African countries. But parents must still pay for uniforms, books, shoes, transportation, and in some cases for the desk. There are sometimes "harambee" fees, whereby parents are asked to pay for school construction or improvements. Many of the street children never manage to find the necessary funds, and therefore are totally uneducated and illiterate. Others attend only when the mother can find fees for a short duration. Even so, there is a strong belief in education as an ultimate escape from poverty.

African children still consider it a great privilege to attend school, and seldom question the relative value of the learning to their daily needs. The mothers often do without their own basic needs in order to keep at least one of her children in school.

As Todare points out, the poor are not only the last to enter school, but the first to leave:

> Schooling, the poor quickly learn, in most countries, is an escape from poverty for only a few. The poor are the first to drop out because they need to work, the first to be pushed out because they fall

> asleep in class as one result of malnourishment, and the first to fail their French or English tests because upper income children have had better opportunities at home. (p.255)

Michel Saint-Germain (1989) agrees that a different form of education is required. In his article in CIDA's Development magazine entitled "Education and Theories of Development" he states that:

> Education, to date, has produced generations of submissive people who only wait to enter the system so they can perpetuate it. . . . In this view, education is currently dispensed not to promote the interests of societies but to perpetuate the process of underdevelopment.
>
> . . . Structure, rather than theoretical basis, is one of the main reasons for the (at least apparent) failure of educational efforts. . . . education must, first of all impart knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable individuals to function within their environment. (p.20)

Nonformal education might be defined as organized activities offering knowledge and skills according to expressed needs of the learner. It offers more flexibility and greater adaptability than is found within a formal education system, and is designed to be more appropriate to the learner's environmental and experiental consciousness. It can be put into action with a minimum of resources and in small spaces.

Saint-Germain feels that the time has come for nonformal education to be developed into widely used programs:

> Just as the theories of "national" development have gradually given way to theories of "community" development, so the idea of nonformal education - designed and carried on outside a rigid, graduated structure - has germinated. It is more appropriate and flexible, with a wider range of subjects and greater

> adaptability than the formal education system. It is aimed at a heterogeneous clientele of children, adolescents and adults brought together by needs or roles.(p.20)

He contends that the formal education structure will always be necessary, but only for a minority of the populace. In most countries of the world only a small percentage of the population obtain secondary school diplomas. Since there are more of the world's children outside the elitist institutions than within, methods are needed to accommodate those outside the systems, in order that they retain their dignity and personal potential. Informal education programs can fit into communities without demanding elaborate facilities, expensive materials, or specialized professional instructors.

The term "development education" (Bopp, 1985) might also be used to describe nonformal types of learning facilitation. Bopp describes development education as follows:

> The fundamental basis of all human learning is the structure of our relationship to the universe. . . . It constitutes our habitual way of seeing, making sense of and interacting with experienced "reality". . . . It is our "world". . . . while I have learned most of what I know through practical involvement with the "world", I have also been taught by others whose practical interest was to maintain the pattern of human life as they know it. (p.211,212)

Formal school curricula are designed to promote society as is most expedient for the status quo. This type of learning is what Bopp describes as "maintenance learning" (defined as, "... the process of inheriting or reproducing the 'world' from generation to generation"). The comparison he offers is defined as "innovative learning" (which takes place during times of crisis). (p.213) Social crises interrupt the regulated social pattern. Bopp includes times

of war, hunger, or ecological tragedy as instigators of the necessity for "innovative" education. People in abject poverty require innovative education, creative alternatives in relating to and recreating their world, because it is a world unlike that of mainstream society in that there is continual anxiety and crisis. Educating for survival is unlike educating for social continuity.

Curriculum materials designed in the spirit of Friere's solidarity or Bopp's universal relationship would be led by the voices of the people themselves.

> "The art of making curriculum is the art of keeping the conversation going between learners and the universe. The fateful separation between the theory of education (as manifested in the established "curriculum") and the practice of education, in classrooms (or wherever else it may occur) interrupts that conversation, bureaucratizes educational praxis and is therefore fundamentally subversive to the process of development promoting education.(p. 232)

If the curriculum in development education looks different so does the image of a teacher. Within the project my partner and I were often expected to be the authorities who would 'feed' information which would magically produce the desired results. We did not consider ourselves to be the experts of the women's development, but rather they themselves were the 'experts'. Only they could identify their own needs and take responsibility for assessing their own progress and evaluating the programs in terms of effectiveness in their community. We were still guides and facilitators but the teachers were most often the women.

Bopp describes a development oriented educator:

> The term "educator" is also problematic to the concept of development promoting education. This is certainly not because there is not a role for an educator, but because of the narrow and misconceived

> notions the term conjures up. These misconceptions derive from the experience of schooling in industrial cultures wherein the educator is a technocrat.(p.218)
>
> . . . authentic (development promoting) education begins in love, a reaching out from the heart to heart. . . . The educator is not one who knows and is thereby granted power over others who do not know. The educator is a developing subject and with other developing subjects, engages the universe in dialogue. (p.219)
>
> The process of authentic education educates all its participants. The educator learns how to touch the hearts and inspire the courage of others. The educator is as much "taught" as are all the other learners in the process.
>
> Hence, if as an educator I have any desire to promote and assist in the process of human development, I will somehow have to step outside the role of "educator" and become a person, and eventually a friend, to my co-partners in the enterprise of transforming "the world". (p. 220)

C. Definition of Terms

Conscientization

Conscientization as related to this project involves raising of awareness, primarily of the women in the cooperatives, secondarily of the project workers and volunteers in both countries, and thirdly of the communities affected by the project's informal education programs. Friere, the 'father' of the concept of 'conscientization' explains it as a process of "becoming", of transforming one's reality and attaining freedom to understand the forces in one's life, and of controlling one's own destiny. He describes it as a means by which . . . "men, through a true praxis, leave behind the status of objects to assume the status of historical subjects".

*Cooperative

The term "cooperative" is used in this study to describe a

group of persons registered under the rules of government for the purposes of group action and/or decision-making. Women's cooperatives in Africa are most often formed to collectively generate income through small business ventures, or to facilitate a plan of action for their own community, such as building a school or church. Within the Shadow Valley self-sufficiency project the cooperatives registered themselves in order to legally meet, discuss, plan, and implement cooperative projects to improve their own living conditions, to assist each other in crisis, and to gain access to banking services.

The women explained that the concept of women's cooperatives is not foreign to their culture. Traditionally the women of the villages worked together and socialized closely with each other to achieve the necessary cohesion within a community.

Development

"Development" is a buzz word among international aid agencies. For the purposes of this project it involves improvement of lifestyle according to the needs determined by the participant.

> Development is a social process in which people join together to build economic and political institutions serving the interests of the majority. In that process, more and more people unite to acquire the knowledge and techniques they need to develop their resources and free themselves from needless hunger, disease and ignorance. (Aid As Obstacle, p.13)

Friere warns that we must not confuse modernization with development. 'Development' goes beyond national economic concerns to the 'humanization' of those who have been denied basic rights and basic human needs such as adequate food and shelter. Development involves the human spirit, plus physical, mental, and intellectual growth. Michael Bopp describes "the essential task facing developing people" as being "the reconstruction of a

meaning-making system that is whole, integrated, and utterly their own". For the women and children of this project development means freedom to 'Be' -- healthy, safe, and valued. Their development vision involves the basics -- a permanent residence, employment, and a stable life for their children.

Feminism

Feminism is most widely used as a generic term for the value placed on women's experience. Patricia Maguire bases her definition on a belief that, globally, women face many forms and levels of oppression due to male domination. She describes feminism as being committed to uncovering and understanding the causes of the various types of oppression against women. An action oriented definition might state that it is dedicated to supporting individual and collective efforts to bring an end to sexism and racism.

Betty Reardon's definition states that, "Feminism is a belief system and set of values based on the idea that all persons are equal and all persons have a right to dignity." (U.of A. Peace Conference WCCI 1989)

Feminists acknowledge their differences and resist stereotyping of women. Generally there is a deep connection with the earth, with nature, with birth and death, the cycles of seasons, and the stages of life. There is a respect for the intuitive and spiritual side of human awareness, and a sense that machinery, technology, and the corporate mentality have taken us far from the essence of our humanity.

Feminist Movement

The 'Feminist Movement' is referred to by Fritjov Capra in the following words:

> The old value system is being challenged and profoundly changed by the rise of feminist awareness originating in the women's movement. (p.46)

> Thus the feminist movement will continue to assert itself as one of the strongest cultural currents of our time. Its ultimate aim is nothing less than a thorough redefinition of human nature, which will have the most profound effect on the further evolution of our culture. (p.416)

Since the project involves women only, and does not include the male perspective on the issues, female thinking is inherent in the process. However the African women in this study do not desire nor intend to interpret their perspective in terms of the North American feminist reality. Therefore the activist definition does not adequately reflect their thinking. However, through their discussions regarding relationships with men, it can be said that they share the more 'universal' feminist desire for equal voice, equal rights, and an end to the exploitation of females. This message is expressed either overtly or covertly during most meetings.

Perhaps the feminist movement can be defined generally, as Capra does, as the women's movement (he uses the terms interchangeably), and in those terms the project can be defined "feministic".

New age research

New age research is based on the premise that the world is undergoing a major paradigm shift whereby our traditional systems (governmental, religious, economic, justiciary, commercial, educational) are outmoded and are quickly disintegrating in favor of a yet undetermined new set of values. New age research does not depend upon conventional techniques of statistical evidence, but rather on intuitive and nature-oriented methods of 'Knowing" and 'Being'. Knowledge of a person with a high level of formal education would not be considered of any greater or lesser value than that of a person with innate wisdom.

There is, in new age research, a belief in the global

interconnectedness of all people, systems, and actions. Therefore, the 'specialization' so revered in scientific circles is discouraged in favor of a wide range of knowledge. The competition for knowledge and hoarding of secrets is replaced by an open sharing of information which benefits all rather than a few powerful individuals.

The new age researcher responds within the immediate moment in terms of 'feelings', and welcomes an intimate connection with the rhythm of the cultural and social setting. There is little room for judgement in terms of such dichotomies such as 'right or wrong', 'good or bad', 'better or worse', 'developed or undeveloped'. Every voice has opportunity to be heard and valued. Decision-making is based on consensus. No one in the group is given authority 'over'. Leadership alternates to recognize each person's particular talents and gifts. Critical thinking and open disagreement is accepted as a recognition of differences and a healthy process resulting in greater understanding. Silence is recognized as an opportunity to reflect and meditate.

The totality of the human being (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual) is recognized and valued, with new emphasis given to the areas of emotion and spirit which have for so long been devalued in favor of scientific and economic values. Human connection with the earth, sky, water, and animals is recognized for its importance.

The swing towards information which is qualitative, experiential, and subjective reflects this trend worldwide. And as more and more women and original peoples are subjects of research the ecologically-based spirituality is brought forward as an alternative to a further devastation of the planet.

Slum

This term may offend some people but it is the term normally used by the women in the project groups to describe the community where they live. Other terms which might be used are: shanty

town, ghetto, or squatter district.

The word slum is used in this document to identify an area where the houses are made of mud, or bits of wood, cardboard and plastic. Most of the roofs are comprised of pieces of tin held down with stones. The people often 'rent', from a land owner, the small piece of ground where they have constructed their hut. There are an estimated 400,000 people living in a three-mile-by-one-mile area.

Street based education

This term describes informal education programs designed in answer to needs perceived by the people within the community. The learning programs take place outside any formalized institution of learning and within the community setting. In this project they take the form of gatherings for the purpose of sharing information. Most often a resource person has been invited to teach to specific area of knowledge (e.g. bookkeeping, disease prevention, literacy, nutrition). The teacher may be a volunteer or a hired professional. The process is preferably an interactive one whereby the participants feel free to ask questions and offer their own knowledge on the subject matter. The lesson content is offered in the language of the learners and geared to their education level. Therefore in this project the lessons are verbal rather than written and any visual aids are created from local materials (e.g. samples of food for nutrition lessons, birth control devices for planned parenthood, hand drawn diagrams for lessons in anatomy).

Street Children

For the purposes of this document a street child is defined as a person below age 21 who lives in poverty and derives his/her livelihood for basic needs (food and shelter) from the street life of a city. In most cases the children are homeless, and their mothers often reside in a slum area. The children must resort to begging

for money and scrounging for food (in refuse piles or restaurant garbage bins). The children are reminiscent of Dicken's time. The women in the groups herein described realize that most of their children and grandchildren are "street kids". This realization is a primary source of concern and despair for the mothers.

CHAPTER IV EXPERIENCING THE SETTING

> Poverty is an economic condition, but its effects ripple deep into the human psyche, devastating self-confidence and self-respect. (Durning, p.158)

A. Tourist Perspective

During my first visit to Africa I spent some time as a tourist. Since then I have spoken with many other tourists about the images presented to visitors world wide and how those images shape attitudes. This is a description of the area as a visiting tourist might experience it. (While many tourists have only a few days, a person employed overseas or travelling independently might have greater opportunity to see additional aspects of a foreign culture). From the 1985 log:

> The city is seen from the air as a modern metropolis rising from the middle of a huge African plain. Tall hotels, business buildings, and banks dominate the nucleus, while the crowded city sprawls in an ever expanding radius from the business centre. As a tourist you can expect to be shuttled from the airport to a four-star hotel. The next morning you are taken on safari away from the city and into the game parks. The grasslands look peaceful and untouched. The elephants, zebras and lions seem to welcome the vans full of photographers. The native villagers dress in traditional costumes to guide visitors through their 'genuine' hut compound and sell their handmade jewelery.
>
> Evenings are spent in the dining room of a game park hotel watching animals at a water hole against the backdrop of a brilliant African sunset. The tourists might even climb a sacred mountain, and be served high tea at a hotel owned by a movie star. The guides are happy and accomodating. Escorted back to the bustling city, tourists are usually allowed a few

> days on the coastal beaches, and a day to purchase traditional artifacts, carvings, and momentos to take home. Upon departure visitors may feel confident that they have seen the real Africa, explored the 'dark continent', and contributed to the local economy by travelling here. However, most hotels and touring companies are foreign-owned.
>
> Tourists are driven past slum areas but seldom have an opportunity to visit the shacks or speak to the people. Tourist busses do not stop in squatter areas as it is likely that many tourists would cancel their trip. And yet those tourists who *do* want to understand the issue of poverty deserve an opportunity to experience the reality, and reduce their fear of poor people.

This scenario is common in most third-world countries. Although visitors may see momentary glimpses of poverty-stricken people begging they are warned to avoid contact with beggars and street children. Fear, then, prevents contact. Self-righteous eyes are turned toward 'them' as 'they' become the enemy. Many foreigners may feel 'sorry' about the situation and enquire about ways to help, or they may justify distancing themselves by stating: "It's none of my business"; "If they weren't so lazy they would get a job"; "They are just criminals"; or "Those kids should be in school" (samples of actual comments made to me). A part of our education program has been to arrange for groups of Canadian tourists to visit the women's groups and see their self-help programs. This not only 'enlightens' the visitors but 'enlightens' the community, because their view of foreigners is often as fear-ridden as the foreigner's view of the poor.

B. My First Visit to a Shanty

According to local newspapers the 1989 census resulted in an estimated 400,000 population count of the valley ghetto. The conjestion increases each day as more rural people

enter the city in search of jobs. Most residents are illegal squatters in an area that is considered to be inhabitable due to flooding during rainy seasons. Slum dwellings are made from bits of wood, mud and refuse such as plastic bags and cardboard boxes. Few of the women will ever have ownership of a home. Even so 'landlords' may demand 'rent' from the inhabitants.

The district where the project is centred is a stereotypical third-world squatter slum as seen by the western world on T.V. documentaries. I had seen poverty before, and yet my first real visit was a startling and emotional. There was beauty in the spirit of the women -- their courage, resourcefulness, generosity, and wisdom. From the 1987 log:

> As I walk into the area I step over and between piles of refuse. There are strong odors which come and go as I pass by. I feel so obvious, so white, so alien, so intrusive. I want to tell people that I care, that I am learning.
>
> There is only space for one person at a time to weave their way between the shacks, stepping carefully over rivelets of discarded wash water and vegetable peelings. The ground is uneven, slippery, and difficult to navigate. Chickens and goats ignore the intrusion and continue to dig among the piles of refuse.
>
> Ragged children scurry from the garbage piles carrying their bag of food scraps. The dwellings are themselves constructed of refuse -- bits of cardboard, tin, old boards, and mud. Roofs are held in place by means of stones placed randomly atop twisted pieces of tin or wood.
>
> The 'houses' lean upon one another, using common 'walls'. Each family has one tiny dirt-floor room. Often the families consist of a mother and six, eight, or ten children. Men seem to come and go as they please, but the mothers must shelter their young in whatever fashion they can.
>
> Mothers sit beside their shacks with their babies. Their tired faces show no emotion as I pass. Groups of

children run up to touch my white hand or hold out theirs in anticipation. "Mzungu, mzungu" (white person) , they chant merrily to each other. A ten-year old boy holds a paper bag to his nose -- gasoline or glue? Tiny girls each carry a slightly smaller child on her back or hip. A water tap sticks out of one house and women are lined up waiting to buy their daily bucket of water. There are no signs of latrines but I am told there are a few provided by the city.

Loud rock music, and even louder voices, eminate from those shanties designated by a 'Hotel' sign as drinking places, where ghetto blasters and prostitutes lure the young men. The rock music seems ironic in this setting, and yet the raucous noise bespeaks the discordance of the environment.

After stumbling through the over-crowded maze for a mile a woman greets me with a smiling face and a hearty "Karibu". I am welcomed into one of the shacks in the heart of the slum. I bend to enter through the tiny door and notice how small the space is, and how dark. I am invited to sit on the bed as it is the most comfortable seat. The cloth hung to 'privatize' the bed area has been drawn back. Once my eyes have adjusted to the dark interior I notice the eneven dirt floor, and the five-foot walls lined with milk cartons and faded calendar pictures. The place is clean and tidy despite the degrading environment. There is a kerosene lamp hanging on the wall and a tiny charcoal cooking utensil on the floor in the corner.

The hostess is gracious, with an air of personal dignity and humility. The woman has seven children, yet this is a mere 8x8 living space. Some of her children sleep on the floor, she explains, others a distance away in the city streets. There are gaps in the walls and ceiling where daylight peeps through and I wonder what happens during the rainy season.

Other women begin to arrive one or two at a time. Ceremoniously they place their group registration paper in full view in case the authorities question the purpose of this gathering. As the women squeeze into the tiny hut they find a place to sit -- an upturned pail,

a stool, a board slung between two boxes -- until you are afraid the cardboard walls will burst. Every inch of the space is now filled with bodies attached to expectant faces. Each woman tells something about her life. This one ran away from her village at the age of fourteen because of an abusive husband and has been running ever since. This one is a grandmother and was born in the slum -- she wants her grandchildren to find a way to escape this lifestyle. This one is crippled due to being beaten as a child-- her broken back requires an x-ray but it is too expensive. Her daughter died last month having a coat-hanger abortion. This one fled from Uganda, this one from Sudan, this one from Ethiopia. All of them want to find a way out of this lifestyle.

All the women express concern about their children who are unable to attend school because of the cost of school fees -- they are turning to the streets, stealing, prostitution. It is a dangerous life and many children simply disappear. The women say that they have nothing to offer their children. They try to earn enough money to provide one meal a day.

They say they are happy that I came to hear their story. They know I have come a long way, but there is no concept of global distances or air travel. They ask me to give the women of Canada greetings -- they want them to know that they love them because of the sisterhood of women everywhere.

It is time to go now. Some of the women follow me as I weave my way to the edge of the slum area. As they say good-bye they form a big circle and begin to sing in their own language and move together in rhythmical steps. They are celebrating life, celebrating togetherness. It is a timeless moment I will never forget. "Good-bye" is hard to say. A mere "thank-you" cannot express the gratitude and respect I feel for these women.

This was the first of many such visits.

C. Lives of The Women

Women of poverty often have a history of abuse, oppression, or abandonment. Those who have been relegated to singlehood realize that they have lost their traditional place in society as wife and mother to become "shadows". Women of poverty have little societal worth in a patriarchal society. Nevertheless, in Shadow Valley there seems to be an ingrained belief in traditional male/female roles.

The women tend to have large families even though most are unmarried or male-abandoned. Children are the traditional "wealth", and those ancient inculcations erode slowly. The women have explained that they feel worthless. Often their sense of pride comes through bearing children -- at least they can proudly say they have borne eight or ten children!

In order to feed their families, many of the mothers resort to illegal activities such as prostitution, liquor-making, and vegetable hawking. They are regularly arrested, leaving the children to the streets.

Imprisonment is a major problem for the single-parent mothers, who can be arrested for vagrancy, prostitution, changaa brewing (homemade alcohol), or vegetable selling. When a mother is arrested the children are left to fend for themselves, and must turn to the streets for survival unless relatives in other areas are willing to take them in.

Christine Obbo in "African Women" (p.123) discusses the collusion with authorities regarding illegal activiites. She admits that bribes of many kinds keep illegal businesses running. At the same time as berating and chastizing the women for their illegal activities the police may purchase their illicit wares, and also hold the women 'ransom' by demanding bribes. Any woman who finds herself out of favor with the local authorities may find herself arrested.

Homelessness

It is important to realize the effect that homelessness has on the psyche in order to understand the constant disorientation and societal disconnection felt by squatters. Squatter women are dealing with societal attitudes which relegate them to a veritable garbage dump. They are at the bottom of the social scale, with few rights and little privacy.

A home offers a stable base, feelings of security and protection. It is difficult for those of us in a home setting, living in mainstream society, to imagine the plight of the women and children living in a slum district. It is a life of violence, not only physical violence, but psychological and systematic violence.

Squatters are homeless people. Even though they claim a cardboard house as 'their' territory they have no legal right to reside there, and therefor little security or stability. They cannot hope to own their shacks. There are frequent fires, floods and bulldozers to contend with. Twice a year the rainy season arrives and sudden floods often destroy many of the shanties in the valley. At times bulldozers appear to clear away the unsightly illegal community. Fires are also a common occurance. Open cooking fires ignite the cardboard walls and races from shanty to shanty, or deliberate fires are set to clear an area for someone else. Even when warned in advance of impending disaster the women see no alternative to remaining. There is simply nowhere else to go.

The daily burden of total impoverishment renders them hopeless and disillusioned. These women suffer from a deep kind of burn-out. Their spirits become broken, the faces expressionless, reminiscent of the vacant stare seen in prison camps.

Rootlessness

Roots give identity. To Africans the idea of heritage, of ancestral lineage, is a powerful part of the spiritual and social consciousness. To find oneself without a family history, without ancestral roots, is tantamount to being cast out of one's own race.

The women involved as participants in this project often mention the fact that many of them are orphans, not knowing who their parents and grandparents were, or where they originated. Although some have a tie to a rural area most feel very sad that they are rootless outcasts, and that they have no heritage to pass on to their children.

Naming of children is often done in a particular order. The first two children named after the father's parents, the next two after the mother's parents, next the uncles and aunts on both sides are 'named' within the household. The belief in this naming system is so strong that the family members may refuse to enter the household until they are 'named' by means of a child having their name. This puts tremendous pressure on women to bear numerous children.

The children of the streets, if they have no legitimate father, are often given a derogetory name meaning 'nameless'. They are ashamed of this fact and may refuse to tell a stranger their name for this reason. The cultural value placed on women as vessels of reproduction is supported also by the naming of the older women in terms of their oldest child or oldest son. Therefore, instead of bearing her own name, she is called "Mama Ngugi" or "Mama George".

This naming of the mother in terms of her child may serve to erase her own identity in favor of her identity as 'mother of'. Through Western eyes this may be interpreted as one more strand of patriarchal bondage, giving a societal message that women who are childless are nameless, and therefore useless. The women in the project do not see it as a problem at this point in time, and therefore it was not a topic for group discussion.

Those women who find themselves devoid of a familial support system often feel alone in their sadness except for their children. Therefore many of the mothers focus on the children, who often represent their last chance for escape from the slums -- "If one child is educated perhaps he will become rich and support the family". Also, the children can bring income by begging or

prostituting, or even stealing. Most of the mothers regret and abhor this lifestyle, and search for ways that their children might avoid or escape from the street life.

D. Rural to urban Migration

With massive takeovers of land by rich landlords many African agriculturalists find themselves landless. Original villages have become plantations for export crops such as tea, coffee, sugar, pineapples, etc. Families who lived off the land must find an alternative living style. Land allocation and distribution is a wordwide issue as cities expand and numbers of hungry people increase daily.

Social changes have taken place quickly. The cities are seen by some young rural dwellers as the place to "get rich quick". The glitter of city life, the cars, skyscrapers, clothing, televisions, and night-life portray images of wealth and power. The 'old' ways may appear backward and the 'old' values may be discarded in favor of 'new' values, though not quite defined or understood. The new generation, educated in western-style schools, look to the city to fulfil their dreams for modern jobs, while the voices of the elders in the villages fall silent as they watch the old ways die.

Some young girls come to the city when their families can no longer support them, become caught up in the 'tourist trade', and after several children, end up in Shadow Valley as outcasts, unacceptable even in their village of origin. Other women migrate into the cities searching for their husbands who left the villages to find work in the city and never returned. They may find their husband living with another woman, or they may never find them. Because women in Africa seldom have any land rights there may be little chance of returning to the agricultural areas.

Women have told of running away from abusive situations to get lost in the slum. Others are refugees or illegal 'aliens' fleeing

wars and droughts, with slim hopes of returning to their country of origin.

There are many reasons for the worldwide migration from rural to urban areas which result in the overpopulation of cities and the squalor of the world's slums:

1. Abandonment and/or abuse of women causing them to run away and hide.
2. Military activity or wars causing destruction of homes, villages, and farms.
3. Increased international pressure on developing countries to produce export products instead of food -- resultant land sales or plantation expansion causing displacement.
4. Increased unemployment while costs of housing, food, and transportation rise.
5. Increased costs of education widening the gap between rich/poor, educated/uneducated.
6. Curruption in service industries and government mismanagement causing lack of payment for agriculture products and unjust treatment of small land holders.
7. Social and economic pressures on youths to migrate to cities in order to be 'modern' and/or 'western'.

CHAPTER V HEARING THE VOICES OF THE WOMEN

> What it is that a stranger to the process of a people's world has to teach them cannot be taught and remains forever frozen in another dimension until it is released in the mutualistic dialogue that emerges out of an effort to transform some aspect of a shared "world". (Bopp, p.220)

A. Introducing the Women's Groups

The women in these cooperatives are all suffering under the burden of poverty. All three groups discussed here take part in the workshops and their children attend the street children's camps. All three groups produce and supply traditional handicrafts for sale. The project has assisted them in their income generation projects and provided emergency assistance, group counselling, skills training, and leadership training.

The Wamathina Women's Group

This was the first, and largest of the Women's Cooperatives, now divided into five sub-groups according to the interests and activities. They are the saddest group because they live deep in the Valley where the floods and fires occur regularly. They are women who have daughters and granddaughters who have turned to the streets. Some are parents of crippled children. Their leader's home is the first home I ever visited in the valley. She has been a strong force in helping, but has been severely beaten by her husband on several occasions.

The Wamathina group have taken part in workshops and learning activities for themselves and their children, and they can earn small incomes through group activities such as selling charcoal, lamp oil, shoes, lumber, firewood, and vegetables. At the Maji Mazuri Centre they do some of the volunteer work, such as cooking for children's Saturday programs, and organizing youth activities.

The Kuku Group

"Kuku" means "chicken" in Swahili. This group of energetic mothers has managed, with small intermittent infusions of funds, to develop a successful chicken raising business. Their chicken shed serves also as their meeting place. Recently a wire fence was built surrounding their compound, and while I was there they were planting a collective garden for vegetable selling. Their resourcefulness serves as an example to other women in the community.

The Kuku women have now encouraged their children to form cooperatives in order to begin small income-generating businesses. This action arose after a meeting held to discuss the problems caused by the vagrancy of the youth in the community. The Kuku women, although determined not to interfere with the youth's fledgling business, are keeping careful watch over their progress, because they are very anxious that these groups succeed, and spawn more such activities throughout the community.

The Gikabu Women's Group

"Gikabu" is the word for "basket", the handwoven type of baskets used to carry heavy loads on one's back. These women are older in age. They earn a meagre living by selling vegetables on the roadside or tramping door-to-door. Some of them are very old, and are supporting children and grandchildren on their daily earnings. Since they have formed their group they have been learning how to keep track of their money, and how to save some of it in the bank when possible. They also help each other in various ways, such as solving family problems, or caring for children.

The Project has made it possible for a few women to purchase selling licenses. These licenses can be difficult to procure due to the high demand, and the "cost" of bribes, and yet without the licenses they can be arrested and imprisoned. Another benefit of belonging to an organized group is that the goods can be purchased in bulk and divided among the women.

They meet at six o'clock in the morning to purchase their goods at the main market place. Once their baskets are overloaded they stagger off, the cord tight across their forehead, to try to sell the goods. The women cover many mile and are exhausted by the end of their long day. But as an organized group they can buy in bulk, map the territory fairly between them, and warn each other of unfair customers.

Some meet again at 1:00 P.M. in the courtyard of a particular house. The house was owned by an old East Indian gentleman. When he died he stated in his will that this group should always be allowed to meet on this property. So each day they gather in the afternoon to re-distribute the vegetables among themselves, discuss their selling experiences, and record their earnings before returning to the streets to finish the day's business.

B. Ten Women Speak (Wamathina Group):

The meeting was held in a one-room shack where the chairwoman (with seven children) lived. Twelve adults and five children squeezed through the door and found a perch of some kind. The walls were made of wood and cardboard and the roof of rusty tin held in place by rocks of various sizes. There was no floor, only the rather bumpy ground. A bed of sorts took most of the space, with a few stools and a small table. There were no smiles on the faces of the women. I felt rather foolish with my visitor's grin. I had arrived from Canada on the previous day. This was my second visit to Africa.

My partner, in her role as facilitator, introduced me to the women, and explained that she and I would be working together. Next, she invited each member to say something about themselves. The women spoke in Swahili or Kikuyu. On this occasion my partner took the time to translate their words immediately into English for the tape recorder (on some occasions the sessions were recorded and later translated). Some issues were discussed in several

languages until all of us were satisfied that understandings were complete.

ISSUES

First Mother:

"My husband went away to look for a job in the mines in Tanzania and did not return. He disappeared so we don't know whether he forgot to return. I am left with the seven children and have been struggling to raise these children. I have no job. I have attempted small businesses that don't seem to succeed. The expenses of bringing up a child is more than the income that I can get. I can't afford to send them to secondary education. Even the ones in primary school are not able to buy books or pens, and other things required. It has been a joy for me since I joined this group. I got together with these people.

Abandonment of women and children

Unemployment

Education expenses

Group support

"Before I used to think I would commit suicide because of the problems I was facing, and I felt like I was facing all these problems alone. By sharing the problems with others I feel like I am not alone any more. I love my children very much and I would like to make sure that they have food, but I am not able to do that, so I feel that I am not worthy to live. I feel pitiful to my children because of the way I see things. But women group has helped me a lot emotionally. When I meet the other women I find out they are in as many difficulties as I am in.

Psychological problems

Guilt connected with poverty

Sharing of problems

"Among my children one of them has finished secondary school. She did very well but because I had not paid the school fees owing the head master would not let her know the exam results. I gave as much money as I had but it was not enough. My daughter then became ill from the sadness

Stresses of youths

for three days. This is the first day that she woke up from the bed.

"I am very happy to hear that the women overseas are concerned about our problems, and that they also have problems. Please give them our greetings and ask them to continue to pray for the women in this group."

International connection

Second Mother:

"I came from (a rural area). I live here. I sell water. I am very thankful that you are here. It shows that God is with us, because how can people from so far away come to see us. When people are together prayers are heard. I am a single mother. I am looking for a way to bring up my children."

Third Mother:

Rural to Urban Migration

"I am from (a rural area). I live here now with all my children. The reason I came here is because of problems. Whenever I listen to the hardships facing other women in the group, it seems that all our problems are alike, all related to bringing up our children. Even just coming together as a group is a way of seeing how we can help each other. I find that whenever I am alone in the house I feel like I am all alone with big problems but when I come to the group I am not alone.

Understanding common problems

"Our biggest problem is a vicious circle. We cannot send our children to school, so they end up just living in (Shadow Valley) and becoming part of this community. The visitors that you have been sending to us have been very encouraging, because coming to be with us means that they recognize us as human beings.

Importance of education

Self-worth

"My special request is if they could

listen to our problems, and help us to educate our children because that is the only way they will be able to move from where they are right now."

Belief in education as an escape from poverty

Fourth Mother:

"This is my home. I cannot even say where my original home was because this is the only home I know, and the only place where I have a place to stay. I have children that live with me.

Most of them are not in school. I can't send them to school, because I am not employed and I don't have a husband. Often we make this craft work, but we can't make enough money from it to help our children. I am very happy that you came because you have given us the message that women have similar problems, and that there are universal problems that all women can understand."

Inability to provide education

Problems related to womanhood

Fifth Mother:

"I don't have a home anywhere else but here. All my children were born here. It is a special moment that you are able to come and sit here with us and meet with us and listen to us. Often when we gather together we think that it is only(. . .) women that have problems, but you are telling us that women in other countries have a variety of problems, and we are relieved to hear that, because it means there are many women trying to find solutions to women's problems, and a wider circle.

"I come to the meetings with a heavy burden, and go home with a lighter load, because I have been able to share it with others, and that gives me encouragement day-to-day.

Encouragement through group sharing

"When you go back to your country

"When you go back to your country please share your experiences, and ask other women to continue to pray for us. We need to encourage each other, and care about each other's problems."

Need to feel connected with other women

Sixth Mother:

"I have eleven children. I look after them alone. Three of them are in school right now. They just run around in (Shadow Valley). They all went to seventh grade and I couldn't go any further with them. I tried to find a training program for them but I couldn't afford that either. I have no money. Yesterday one was expelled from school because of lack of school uniform. I don't want to talk about my problems now because I get very emotional because I am under a lot of strain."

Large families (Planned parenthood)

Emotional stress

Seventh Mother:

"I have eight children. I am a woman who has no husband. I find it difficult to explain my problems because my life has been a sad story. My mother also never got married. She lived in (Shadow Valley), and she died here, and she left me here. I struggle very much with my children. My children love education very much but I am not able to educate them. For example, one of my children has gone up to secondary education, but all of them are at home with me now and I don't know what to do with them. All of them are around me and when I try to think of what I can do with their lives I feel like I am helpless and hopeless. I can't send them to learn any kind of training and that makes me feel very desperate. It is most difficult when you come together in the evening, and have nothing to give them and nothing to do with them. Two of them

Single Parenthood

Being an orphan

Feelings of hopelessness

Lack of opportunities for youth training

from school because they didn't have school fees.

"Regarding the problems that I face every day, I feel encouraged when I come here and share with these other women. But I am now feeling very uncomfortable even to come to the group, because my problems are becoming too big for me to face. I am the treasurer of the group. I feel like I am letting the group down, because some days I am not able to come. I sit at home and think about all the difficulties I face, and it makes it difficult to want to share with others.

Disillusionment - dropping out of group due to feelings of inadequacy

Loneliness and alienation

"If there is any way you can help us by suggesting things we can do to solve the problems we are facing we would be very happy.

Request for solutions

"My daughter did very well when she was in school. And it kept her out of this environment, and it is painful for me to watch her now in this environment every day. I will stop talking now because if I start explaining all my problems there are more than too much."

Watching children turn to the streets

Eighth Mother:

"I was born and brought up in (Shadow Valley). I am in a very difficult position in life. I am mother of six, and have always been a single mother. One of my children went to the eighth grade and I couldn't even help him with his education. The rest of them are around here. They run around in the community, and I don't even know what they do on a day-to-day basis. I struggle each day just to make sure that I have some food to give them. But the businesses here are not sufficient to depend on to help the children. I sell paraffin oil, but I can't get enough to look after my children. I don't

Lost control of children

Being unable to care for children

like to see them with nothing. It is hard to talk about it."

Ninth Mother:

"I am the mother of five children, two girls and three boys, and each of my daughters have two children because they can't continue in an education. The boys just run around in the streets and do whatever they can to earn a living. I just do small businesses here and there, and I also am the leader of this group. I don't have a mother or father. I have a husband who never had a job. He does whatever he can do. He also did not have parents. I am happy that even though I am an orphan I am able to share my problems with other people. (She starts to cry) I cannot go on talking, because my tears are flowing.

Girls becoming mothers at an early age

Street boys often resort to criminal activities

Being an orphan

(At this point one of the other women said, "Why are you crying when I have more problems than you do?")

"The reason why I cry when I talk about my problems is because I feel that if I had a mother and father I would at least be able to share my feelings with my mother and father, because I have seen other women who are able to get help from their parents. I can't talk about my problems because I have too many, and I don't want to go on and on with them.

"I am very happy that you have come to visit us. All the things you have been sending to us we have been using, and we are very thankful about it."

Small gifts of used clothing, *etc.*

Tenth Mother:

"I have seven children. My husband died in 1979. He used to work for the Bata Shoe Company in . He left me with five children. Later on I had two more

Widowhood

children. My husband had no piece of land, and because we used to live in a rented house I had to go back to my own father. My father did not have land either. My husband had left me with a machine to do knitting. I went on with the business. However the burden of raising the children became more and more difficult. I have struggled with them. My daughter went up to the seventh grade, then I had no school fees for her to continue. She is now at home and has three children. I ran out of money because the knitting machine broke, and I had no money to fix it because I gave all my money for school fees. I started buying and selling vegetables. The income I get is not even enough to feed the children.

Landlessness

Knitting machine for income

Broken knitting machine

Inadequate income

"I am so glad that you came from so far away to be with the women here. I feel that this is a very important time while you are here. Since my husband died I felt like my problems were greater than any one else in the world, so I withdrew into my sadness. I was never involved in any group. But now I see that being involved with a group is a wonderful thing. When I was alone I couldn't tell anyone about my struggle, so I am very thankful."

This process of recording the voices, documenting the sequence, and identifying the issues provides facilitators with the basis for further discussions focussing directly on the issues raised by the women themselves. These identified issues are then translated by the women into a list of needs (see Planning Ch. V).

It seems obvious from listening to the voices of the women that their main problem could be defined under one label, 'poverty'. Poverty is something they all have in common. There is also a poverty of spirit brought about by many factors: self-devaluation, social stigmatism, sickness, depression, anger, and years of

silence.

They live very much "in the moment", dealing with the daily problems (safety, shelter, food, and illness). Therefore momentary, immediate help makes them feel happy. They dare not look beyond the immediate for fear of seeing themselves destroyed completely. They are unaccustomed to making any long-range plans. For many of the women 'tomorrow' was as far as they had ever planned. They truly live one day at a time.

Many needed first to tell their past -- how they had come to be in this place. In fact, one or two dwelled obsessively on the past, unable to see a future. We talked about the 'now' situation -- what is happening today to them and how do they feel. It was a step at a time. All my pre-programmed ideas were jettisoned in favor of a soul-to-soul intuitive process of listening, caring, and innovating. So gradually we needed to 'seed' ideas and ask for plans for tomorrow, next week, next month.

C. The Imprisoned Member

This meeting was called to discuss the situation of a family whose mother, Gladys, had been arrested and sent to jail for six months. This woman had come to the project office on the Friday prior to her arrest to ask for money for her children's school fees. My partner, realizing how many school fees are needed in Shadow Valley, and how little money the project has to distribute, told Gladys to return on the Monday, by which time we would see whether there were any funds available for school fees. The son arrived at the office on Monday morning with his head down, and told of the arrest of his mother for trying to raise the money by brewing illegal liquor. Now school would have to be postponed, and any available monies would be needed for food.

The women's group had previously decided to try to raise the 5,000 shilling fine. They were able to raise about one-quarter of the full amount, so they sent a representative to the project office

to seek help for Gladys' children. We agreed to hold a meeting with the group to discuss the situation, and find possible solutions. In the meantime the group members had been trying to care for the woman's children. There ensued a discussion of the situation regarding the family of Gladys, the imprisoned member. Some of her children were present at the meeting and the two oldest sons were crying when their mother was discussed. From the recorded tapes:

First Speaker: "She is the mother of eight children. She has no husband. She was caught when she was brewing changaa (illegal homemade liquer made from maize). It was a way to send her children to school and feed them. Her first-born is here, with the younger children. The grandmother is here also. We are all here together in Shadow Valley. When she was arrested she was asked to pay 5,000 Kenya shillings. As women we came together to see if we could raise that money, and it was not possible. We all tried very hard to see if we could raise the funds to help that woman. We struggled, and we were able to gather 1,500 Kenya shillings. The remainder is 3,500 K s. So we couldn't figure out what to do. So we have been trying to look after the children of that mother."

Facilitator: "These women would not normally be able to raise this money, but they are doing it because Gladys is a member of their group, and they feel like she is part of their cooperative 'family', and that every member is willing to help each other in a crisis."

Second Speaker: "Two of us went to visit her, and she asked them to try to get her out, and she was crying. So we felt helpless to do anything. Can we go again with you?"

Rosalind: "We will go and see her. We will try to find a way to

raise the money, and we will talk to the authorities to see if it is possible to get the amount lowered. But once she is released, what solutions do you in the women's group see for this problem of brewing changaa? It is an illegal activity, so how can we prevent other people from having to resort to this way of raising money, and then being arrested?"

Facilitator: "There are other alternatives for this woman. Recently she started raising chickens. She was hoping to grow them and sell them so that she could stop brewing changaa. The chickens were just small chicks when she was arrested, and within a week all the chicks died."

Rosalind: "Was the death of the chickens caused by neglect? Did the children not know how to look after the chickens while the mother was absent?"

First Speaker: "Yes, that is why."

Rosalind: "If we bought some more chicks for her on the loans program after she is released from prison would the oldest sons be willing to help her with the chickens and take some responsibility for them?"

Oldest Boy: "Yes, we could."

Facilitator: "But the big issue is the brewing of Changaa. This is a traditional business, yet it is illegal, so the women have got to stop doing it. Nevertheless, business is good and when they need some money for school fees they will resort to it. It is also a health hazard because some of it is poisonous and people can get very sick."

Rosalind: "So if it is a way of life it will take time for the

women to decide that it doesn't work for them because it causes too many problems and because there are more profitable means of earning."

Facilitator: "Yes, they don't want to talk about it now because they can't identify themselves with the activity in public, but if we can discuss the issue at workshops and offer them better means of income generation this problem may be solvable."

Outcome Of The Meeting:

Over the following few days my partner and I arranged for the magistrate to process the legal papers on Gladys' case. We paid the fine, and went to the prison to fetch her. The next day we met with her and the oldest boys, and loaned them the money to restart their chicken business. This time the entire women's group was keeping an eye on the business venture, because they had provided some of her fine money, and they did not want her arrested again.

This is an example which demonstrates some of the ways that group involvement can offer support in a community economically, socially, and psychologically.

D. Voices And Patriarchy

Women who have never had a voice have never heard their own voice. Women in a patriarchal society receive messages from birth that men's voices are the voices of authority:

> "Gradually demystifying age-old taboos against discussing sexuality and mistreatment at the hands of men, women gain perspective on the hardships of their lives."(Durning p. 163)

It took several meetings before the women began to touch on the issue of male oppression, and even then they were careful not to name names or places. There is a real fear of reprisal in the

form of beating or even murder. These messages of female powerlessness become ingrained. In the past they have not been expected or encouraged to make the 'real' decisions for the family or the community, or even for themselves. Some wait indefinitely for someone to rescue them. But it only took two or three meetings for the women to realize that as single, widowed, or abandoned women they are now the decision makers. The faces became more animated, more interested, more alert. Where there were ideas for betterment there was hope.

Gradually the younger women spoke up instead of leaving all the talking to the oldest ones. Many admitted that they had formerly given up, become depressed and withdrawn, but in an active group they could feel connected and cared about.

E. Voices In Retreat

My partner and I had decided in 1987 that it would be wonderful to take some of the women for a holiday. We agreed that other people in the world are allowed holiday times to rest, play, renew their energy, but people living in the slums remain in an environment which is destructive to the human spirit, devoid of the normal beauties (trees, flowers, lakes, birds and animals) in a natural setting. These women, we decided, deserve a break from the drudgery and darkness of Shadow Valley. It would be "an experiment in setting some spirits free to explore the universe"(1987 log).

Finally in 1989 our dream of providing a physical/mental/emotional/spiritual break for some of the women came to fruition. We wanted to include learning in the holiday so that a woman chosen to take part could in turn take some ideas or knowledge back to the remainder of her group. We would call it a "leadership retreat". All that was required were train tickets, bus tickets, rental of two huts at a missionary retreat centre, and a small allotment for food. The funding agencies were not comfortable

with the idea of funding a 'holiday" for street women so the funds were donated privately by individual Canadian women who understood the need.

We asked each of six groups to select two of their members to attend. The selection procedure was left entirely up to the groups, with a suggestion that their selected representatives be willing to bring back the learning to the entire group. There was great excitement.

The selected women had to organize for their families to be cared for during their absence. There was also criticism and jealousy to deal with. The general belief is that a woman should not take unnecessary trips away from her home, however meagre that home may be. These women were breaking the rules and therefore taking a risk in order to prove that this type of learning is beneficial to the families and the community.

Meanwhile, we had found a crippled infant, nearly dead, and located a doctor willing to treat the child without payment. Although she was four years old her frail and rigid body weighed that of a one-year-old. Esther had been born normal to a thirteen year old girl, and became brain damaged as a result of abuse. She could not feed herself and would never be able to walk or control her bladder and bowels. She was very ill and in need of constant care. I could not leave her behind so she came to the women's retreat strapped to our backs or held in our arms.

We were to meet the women at the train station and travel overnight to the coast. Each of the six cooperatives were represented -- and six different tribal groups. We were now operating in four languages (English, Kiswahili, Masaii, and Luo). The women introduced each other politely and clung to their own friends. At first the women were hesitant about having a 'cursed' child in our midst, but soon they realized that Esther was a blessing to the group, not a curse, and they began to take turns holding her.

Discussion on the train:

First woman:

"I never thought this would be possible for me. I have never been away from the city. I have never travelled on a train. I have never been together with strangers and felt happy like this. Did you see the giraffes and the gazelles as we passed? I have never seen those animals before. And look how fast we are going? I don't know where we are going but it is so beautiful and I don't care where we are going because wherever it is it is such a happiness for me."

Second woman:

"I am from the rural area not the city so I have seen many animals but I have never imagined what it would be like to be on one of these trains. I was so scared at first. I am safe with you but when I went to the latrine a man pushed me and shouted at me."

Third Woman:

"I have brought some cassava. Would you like some?" (She unwraps a piece of cloth containing the cooked vegetables and the others bring out their donations to the 'picnic').

After eating, a few of the women began to sing. Later, sleeping arrangements were discussed. Some were afraid to sleep on the top bunk because "It is too far off the ground". There was not much sleeping done. Some of the women continued to watch out of the windows all night so that they would not miss anything. As the morning light appeared we were passing many small rural huts, and the women discussed the lifestyle and the shambas. Finally the train pulled into a coastal city.

After a bus ride and a ferry ride we arrived at our destination, a mission retreat centre beside the Indian Ocean. By now the women were chatting with each other, comparing their experiences, but still with their own partners. When they saw the ocean a sudden hush came over them. They had never seen so much water and asked if it stretched to the end of the earth.

When I announced that we would now enter the water

together there was obvious concern. I held little Esther who was smiling happily at the sight and sounds of the ocean. Gingerly, we all waded in, and then sat or knelt in the calm ocean. The women's frowns turned to smiles, and the smiles turned into laughter. They were joyful and playful in the water and very brave. They asked why the water was salty and what made the waves. If there was land on the other side why could they not see it, and why was the water colored. These questions indicated their quest for learning and a feeling of freedom to question in this situation. Their minds were working quickly and my answers, though inadequate in my estimation, led to more questions.

Suddenly I understood the power of baptism. Entering the water together was somehow symbolic of forming a strong sisterhood. It seemed that once we had experienced that risk together the women saw themselves as bonded. The tribal differences were erased and we were free to share each other's ocean, each other's universe. I had not realized until afterwards just how risky that step into water had been for many of the women.

After the swim we gathered in the shade to begin our leadership training process. We had already travelled far, not only in miles, but in accepting each other. My partner was the facilitator, and opened the session with an invitation to talk about the swimming experience.

Spora : "I did not want to show fear of entering the water. I was sure I would die, but I did not want to be left on the shore as the only one who did not die. I preferred to drown together than watch others perish."

The two Maasai women said that once they were actually in the water their fear disappeared and they realized that they were the only ones in their whole tribe who had ever been swimming. This gave them a sense of personal power. "This time together is an adventure and I want to try as many new things as possible and then tell the stories at home. My people will never believe I went

in the water!"

Njeri : "I think I have died and gone to heaven. I didn't know there was such a beautiful place here on this earth. I had so many problems at home but here they seem to fade like a bad dream. I feel like I can fly."

Discussion of the present feelings led to emotional stories of the past. Personal histories were shared. Each one contained rich descriptions of hardship, escape from danger, birth and death, sickness and sorrow. Emotions were high, and by sharing the stories the women shared themselves. Each woman had as much time as she required, judgement did not enter, and empathy was all-encompassing. Wambui's story is presented here as one example which many of the women identified with.

Wambui's Story:

"I was sold to an old man at the age of thirteen. I didn't know my father was arranging it until I saw the old man bring the goats. By then it was too late and I had to go to his compound and be his wife. All the other wives were afraid of him. He was very cruel to us. We were not allowed to leave the compound. He did not provide us with food or clothing. We had to clean up his urine and his vomit every day. He would laugh at us and hit us. Finally I ran away with my children and hid in the city. But my father found me and brought me back. I wanted to kill myself. I thought the man would kill me. I ran away again and I am still afraid he will find me but I think he is dead by now. Maybe his spirit is following me which is why I have so much hardship. I tried to find a nice man but every man seems to drink and beat his wives. I have eight children now in Shadow Valley and grandchildren. Being able to talk about all the sadness helps me a lot. And now when I hear the stories other women I realize our stories are alike. What can women do?"

It is important when an emotional catharsis takes place to provide a 'closing' which lifts the spirits of the participants out of sadness and into joy or empowerment. My partner was careful not to leave the women in a sense of grief for very long. The grieving process is important but so is the healing. Healing can take the form of bringing the group away from the past and into the 'now'. In this moment how are we doing? What are we feeling and experiencing together in this beautiful place? What are our plans for today, tomorrow, next week, next year?

These high power sessions were interspersed with 'release' activities, some form of physical exercise by playing a game together (e.g. soccer, volleyball, tag, etc.) The women explained that they had never played these games, and now they understood why young boys derive so much pleasure from this type of activity. They said they felt like children again, "It brings out the 'mtoto' (child) in me", they exclaimed.

F. The Influence Of Esther

Esther, the little brain-damaged infant, was at first feared and resented by certain members of the group. Having a 'cursed' child in our midst was a bad omen. But soon they began to see that the child was much loved by some of us. Each day Esther became more healthy, active, and alert. Although she was unable to walk, talk, or feed herself, she began to hold a spoon, focus her eyes and smile. These small successes became cause for celebration among the group of women. Our discussion would halt to notice Esther's latest accomplishment. We took turns holding Esther, feeding her, talking to her, moving her arms and legs. She became our 'mascot', and a symbol of our collective and individual struggles.

One woman gave a powerful personal announcement at the end of the retreat:

"When I came here I was carrying a huge rock on my back. I thought my rock was the biggest rock in the whole world. Then I

started to hear that all of you are carrying heavy rocks. My rock got smaller and smaller each day. Now I will go home and my rock will become heavy again. But now I know that the heaviest rock is being carried by little Esther, and if she can carry hers I can carry mine."

CHAPTER VI EVOLUTION OF AN INTERACTIVE PROGRAM

> "In villages, neighborhoods, and shanty towns around the world, people are coming together to discuss and respond to the tightening ecological and economic conditions that confront them. Viewed in isolation, these initiatives are modest - 10 women plant trees on a roadside, a dozen youths dig a well, an old man teaches neighborhood children to read - but from a global perspective their scale and impact are monumental. Indeed, local organizations form a sort of ragtag front line in the worldwide struggle to end poverty and environmental destruction." (Durning p. 154)

A. Needs Identified

In 1985 my partner had observed the slum people from the viewpoint of an outside 'expert'. They were coming to her office for psychological counselling and falling asleep in the waiting room. She found they were frightened, hungry, confused, and unemployed. Their words were guarded and the stories of their lives incomplete -- it is not safe for street people to tell authorities about the lifestyle they are forced to lead. Young men would want a job but were unable to make themselves clean and presentable. Women were worried about their children in the streets and would plead for money to pay school fees.

My partner also realized that these people could not afford to pay her for her services. Nevertheless she was determined to counsel the poor who obviously were most in need of attention. The first step was to visit their homes and see the living environment first-hand. The women were very anxious to have visitors in their homes because guests are considered to be a blessing in Africa and people of the slum are seldom 'blessed'. Both my partner and I cried when we saw the hardship and devastation of Shadow Valley. The eyes of the little children haunted me and called me back again and again.

My partner wisely realized that our own observations were not necessarily correct in terms of the real needs of the individuals living in the Valley. We were not 'authorities' on their

needs. Only they themselves could determine their needs. And only through gathering together and sharing stories could they begin to feel a sense of community and collaboration in envisioning a future, identifying priorities, and creating a plan of action.

The Need to Get Together:

One of the primary needs for the mothers of the street children is an opportunity to get together. Therefore that became the first task. The government had made a rule that no groups were allowed to meet unless they were registered as cooperatives. I am uncertain whether this was in response to past attempted coups, or a way to increase government income, or a method of controlling groups who might become too powerful.

There was a price tag on the official registration procedure which was out of reach for the poor (about $40.00). Our first task was relatively easy -- to provide sufficient funds for the women to register in groups called Cooperatives. First they had to list ten members, and from that list choose an executive. The next task was to choose a name for themselves, then apply for the official document declaring them a registered cooperative.

The Need To Speak

The women needed firstly to speak, and secondly to be heard. The act of speaking was freeing for women who had been conditioned from childhood to be silent. In traditional African culture women should only speak about 'woman' issues, and even then only to their age mates of the village 'family'. All 'serious' business that required decisions was discussed among men, who sat in the shade of a tree hour after hour discussing matters other than 'female' issues.

Therefore, for the women, hearing one's own voice speak was the first revelation. The telling of life stories clarified their own journey for themselves. They realized that they have accomplished a lot and learned a lot. They realized that others share similar

stories and have similar feelings about their struggle through poverty and violence.

Having feelings legitimatized is a big step forward, -- i.e., it is acceptable to feel sad, angry, resentful. These women have every right to feel those emotions, and need to fully 'enter' those feelings and gradually release them. Speaking about the causes of their feelings released some of the long-hidden negative energy. They could begin to go beyond the horror of their past and focus on the future. They began to make connections between their life experiences, their daily lives now, and the future lives of their children.

Speaking on subjects of 'importance' to their families and the community was another major breakthrough. No longer were their discussions limited to inconsequential issues. These are single mothers and grandmothers who are responsible for children and grandchildren, and often an extended family. They need to be able to assess situations and make decisions. And yet their lack of self-worth resulted in a lack of trust in themselves to make decisions. It required a long time in some cases for the women to gain sufficient confidence to discuss issues of magnitude and realize that they do indeed have good ideas and creative suggestions which are in fact possible.

The speaking process gave rise to an awareness of Self. Each woman became a person in her own right once she had a voice, sharing her own story and her own opinions. The power of voicing to gain a 'presence', an identifiable separateness, cannot be underestimated. I could see that once a woman found her voice her energy began to change -- she entered the group, created a verbal and physical space for herself instead of remaining in the shadow, unnamed and unrecognized.

The Need To Be Heard

The women, each at their own speed (some taking weeks or months) began to 'hear' their own voices, and the voices of their

neighbours, in ways they had not imagined. They realized they were not alone in their problems. Hesitantly at first, they verbalized the conditions they were previously afraid to speak of. They brought issues forward. They heard the issues and realized their right to: (a) verbalize and acknowledge the problems, (b) imagine something different, (c) envision various solutions, and (d) create, by means of their own actions, a means of making the vision a reality. Feelings emerged of personal power: power to imagine, envision, and then create, a different kind of future.

Trust in the listener was a requirement for all this. My partner was the first to be trusted. She had become their friend, advisor, and mentor. She was an educated 'outsider' who became an 'insider' within the slum community. I was a visitor, an outsider who was invited in on a 'visitor' basis. But my involvement was necessary to implement their visions for change. They needed to vocalize their ideas to an outsider, test them in a bigger framework. And they needed financial backing. Local people did not trust them and they knew that. Years of being told they were worthless had caused them to believe that. Now that their voices were finally being valued they were anxious for the real test. Could their ideas really work? Could they trust themselves to succeed?

B. Sharing Personal Information

My partner had already built a trusting relationship with the women and children, therefore my presence in the slum community in 1987 was welcomed, at least by the women and children. It was explained to me that when an outsider visits a woman's home it is considered an honor. The visitor must be fed before any discussion can take place. I felt guilty taking food when I knew the children needed it, but I was advised that it would be the height of bad manners to refuse.

The women were obviously curious about me and other white

women, yet often they were too polite to ask questions. I was amazed at first to discover how fascinating my own stories of childbirth and personal relationships were to my African sisters. There was a perceivable change in attitude once personal information was openly shared -- the women became more relaxed and open. Later I realized that this type of information-sharing coincides with the traditional view of women in the village. This is what women are expected to do -- share stories of childbirth, marriage, health issues. Because our 'womanhood' is traditionally based on the function of reproduction family information is 'sacred' in a sisterhood situation. One of the basic differences between men and women seems to be the ability to 'get personal' in group discussions.

By sharing 'secrets' about myself I was making myself vulnerable, and confirming my solidarity as a woman who has experienced some of the same life experiences and feelings such as love, hate, sadness, anger, loneliness, joy, jealousy, and fear. It was a relief to all of us that as women we could speak the same 'language' even if we could not speak the same language in the literal sense. There was curiosity about the way of life for women in Canada; there was surprise that women in all countries share some common problems; and there were lots of hugs and laughter. Beyond that there was also a deep sadness, heavy burdens that I could only partially comprehend.

C. Building an International Link

A large part of the Canadian program consists of informing groups and individuals about the situation and developing awareness and respect for the legitimacy and dignity of street people. This was done by means of education-based presentations in communities, churches, schools, conferences, etc. These activities took place primarily in the province of Alberta although there were a few presentations in British Columbia. The materials

used for presentations consisted of slides, tapes, cultural items such as drums, crafts, etc and personal anecdotes of experiences with the women and children. Each presentation was designed according to the age and interest level. School presentations were designed according to the requests of the teachers.

These presentations were created to be interactive, with the audience participating in some way. For example, at one community gathering the lights were turned out and several participants read transcriptions of the women's own stories which coincided with slides. At another gathering which took place in a church we discussed global poverty in terms of biblical teachings and compared the lifestyle of the slum people to our own.

There was a sincere effort to avoid proselytizing or exploitation. There were no fund raising campaigns nor depictions of African people as helpless passive charity cases, but rather as 'sisters' who needed help to work for economic independence. The point was stressed that Canadians have much to learn from our African co-workers and that through sharing information everyone benefits.

Money was needed, but people (in both countries) were always considered to be the primary resource. Without the right type of people, who could share the 'vision', money could be accessed but might be allocated in ways contrary to the wholistic philosophy. I felt we could lose the 'soul' of the project because agencies can become mini-empires if they lose sight of the person-to-person connection (Durning 1989).

I needed help. Four or five friends were quick to come to my rescue and were willing to form the core committee to operate the administrative end of the project. Assistance was received in producing educational materials, planning presentations, handling the crafts, and organizing volunteers. Operating on a "shoestring" basis meant that everyone had to work very hard to make things happen. No one in Canada is paid for their work. All expenses, including travel, are donated. Several Albertans were anxious to

donate time and money when given an opportunity to be directly involved, with the assurance that the funds and supplies would go to the mothers and children in the slums. At the other end my partner was responsible for keeping the programs going and managing the emergency shelter and the learning programs.

D. Planning Stages

Initially, the money from Canada was used to pay the registration fees for three main groups of about thirty women each. The women had organized their groups according to friendships, similarity of activities, and proximity within the community. All were mothers and grandmothers of street children. As numbers increased the groups divided themselves into smaller units, according to their activities for income-generation projects.

The older women are skilled craft-makers, but they had been selling their crafts on the streets for less than fair prices. Also, they had nowhere to meet to make their crafts together, and nowhere to store their products, which meant they were forced to dispose of their articles immediately instead of marketing them properly. These older women cling to many of the old ways while the younger women feel pressured to be 'modern', to enter the fast-paced city world. Therefore the younger women wanted skills and opportunities to be 'western' in their thinking and actions.

It was considered important to have a clear vision of what we were all working toward. The early 'vision' was simply to provide a place for the women to meet safely and hear each other's voices. But as soon as the voices became loud and clear they had bigger and better plans. Rather than simply complaining to us about the various problems they faced it was imperative that the participants/recipients of the programs determine their own priorities. The women also needed to be fully aware of our restrictions in terms of financial and human resources.

The women, during their organizational discussions

identified the following as primary requirements for their groups. These are not presented in order of priority because each group might list them in a different order but, generally, the following list constituted their perceived needs:

1. A place to meet, to make traditional crafts, to store saleable products, and to take part in rehabilitation programs (i.e. a building of some kind).
2. Opportunities for communication among themselves to discuss specific day-to-day problems and solutions, and to develop an effective network for helping each other.
3. Opportunities for gainful employment: a market for their handmade crafts; opportunities to sell various items within the community; or training for employment in the city. (i.e. job training and employment referencing).
4. Professional consultation and on-going guidance to assist with the planning and implementation of identified programs for learning and collaboration (i.e. education and counselling).
5. Health education programs and health services geared to the needs of families (i.e. nutrition, disease prevention and detection, access to clinics and hospitals).
6. Emergency facilities for those rendered homeless or in severe distress due to floods, fires, imprisonment, etc. (i.e an emergency shelter).
7. Alternative activities for the youths who can no longer attend school, and yet cannot find employment.

These identified needs are interconnected. They do not stand alone as it would seem in this numbered list. These are life issues, merging into one another and overlapping. My partner was the only professional resource person. Although others were invited to take part few were willing to work with people from the slum and none would make a long-term commitment because they were very busy career-building in the city centre. However we would take one

step at a time and build our human resources from within the community.

From the above self-identified areas of need our first objective as community workers was defined as follows: to offer women the opportunity to meet, share, and grow together; and thence to connect, interact, and learn with other groups; and finally, to make social and economic decisions which may improve their health and lifestyle.

E. Creating a Vision For The Future

The picture was becoming clear. A rough sketch of the future 'vision' served to concretize the plan for future action (see Appendix 'A' The Original Vision). This 'dream plan' included an emergency shelter, a learning centre, a health centre, a bakery, and a farm. After registering the groups as cooperatives the small amount of funds from Canada provided rental of an old warehouse building -- the "Meeting Place". The initial gatherings were crowded affairs with children, teens, mothers and grandmothers. Even a few fathers and sons showed up. There was great excitement and celebration.

'People power' was the key. My partner began to train local people (both men and women) as teachers, facilitators, managers, etc. It had been decided that 'experts' are too expensive, and too distant from the reality (we had observed that many projects hire 'outsiders' while it is the 'locals' who need the jobs and are committed to the community). Several local people had demonstrated their loyalty and dedication by serving as volunteers, helping with the children, cooking for the gatherings, helping the women's groups. Three dedicated young persons were given opportunities to work for the project. We found that they understood the street culture, the local languages, and the hidden social structures. They began by assisting the women's groups at their meetings and gatherings, visiting families within the

community, typing reports and keeping records. At this time the project was operating from a small office in a church building near the slum.

It was obvious that a multi-purpose building was required to house homeless persons, and provide space for training programs, group meetings, health services, and a central office. Finally in 1987 a building under construction was leased for three years. It was located in a safe area, had running water, and (at that time) contained ten small rooms. In 1989 a second story was added increasing the number of rooms to eighteen. There is still no electricity, no telephone, and no proper roadway but the programs are in full swing.

F. The Project Today

The emergency shelter building was first leased in 1987. Programs have developed according to need which was determined by listening to the voices of the women in the groups (needs identified in Chapter VI). The shelter now serves the following purposes: (a) emergency housing, (b) meeting place (c) learning centre, (d) nursery school, (e) community outreach, (f) staff housing, (g) street children's camps, (h) store (kiosk), (i) craft production and marketing, (j) "farm", (k) central project office.

a) Emergency housing for women and children who, due to sudden crisis (fire, flood, eviction, etc), require a place to sleep and eat until permanent housing can be arranged.

> The situation at the shelter fluctuates constantly according to the needs of Shadow Valley. If the streets become overly dangerous people seek refuge at the shelter. At times the place is crowded with women; other times with children; and during the camps with teens. (1991 log)

b) Meeting place for women's groups, teen groups, staff

meetings.

The three original groups (Wamathina, Kuku, and Gikabu) often meet at the shelter instead of in a person's shanty as they did initially. The shelter building affords more space and more freedom to speak openly. As well the women like to see the children at the shelter and the girls in the training program. The women offer suggestions for the operating of the shelter and/or the farm. Their voices are still central to the programming. Therefore it is necessary that they be involved in the decision-making.

> The shelter is used for meetings of the women's groups because it is much safer than Shadow Valley or other areas in the city. If the women decide to come during the youth camps the place is overcrowded. But the women learn form the youth dramas and in turn interact with the young people in ways which encourage and instruct the young people. One day there were ninety-two people fed at one 'sitting'. On that occasion the plumbing system was overloaded and it rebelled by clogging -- it took a week of excavation to rectify the problem; then the truck was overloaded (carrying the necessary cement) and required major repairs. I am not as patient as are the Africans with inefficiency! (1991 Log)

c) Learning Centre for street based training. This program was begun as one of the first ideas for the project. Learning was required at each step of the process. The women's groups wanted to learn how to organize, keep records, access banking facilities, and operate small businesses. They also wanted programs for their daughters who may have little formal education and are often unemployed unwed mothers at a very early age (Esther's mother was only thirteen years old). Whereas the women's groups receive their learning programs during their meetings and seminars the younger women required a more formalized program. We organized

a training program in the shelter whereby ten unwed mothers could board for several months while receiving training in sewing, baking, and child care.

The girls are chosen by the women's groups so that: (a) the older women can feel some responsibility for the process; (b) there is a link back to the women's groups; and (c) the older women can assess the effect on the young mothers and the effect on the community.

The instructor for the sewing programs is a local woman who also instructs the girls in baking and record keeping. In the sewing program there are three levels of ability (beginners, intermediate, and advanced). At each level a small "graduation ceremony" is held to recognize the girls' accomplishments. The women's groups attend the graduation and take part in the congratulatory speeches and celebration. Three of the girls graduated from the shelter training now have set up their own sewing business in Shadow Valley.

> A graduation was held before Christmas. The girls had taken their formal government certificate exam and passed. Now the girls go on to the top level, and a few new girls have entered the program at the lower level. One groups of graduates from our program have set up a small tailoring and dressmaking shop in Shadow Valley. I visited their shop and bought a dress. They are well organized and seem successful. They are now training other girls in their shop! (1991 Log).

While the young unwed mothers are living at the shelter they also assist with the washing, cooking, cleaning. They receive instruction in such areas as caring for handicapped children, health issues, nutrition, and community outreach.

d) Nursery school for orphans and handicapped children*

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* The handicapped children comprise another study and are not included in this document.

The aim of this program is to assist Shadow Valley children who "fall through the cracks" (have no other source of help). They may have been abandoned, neglected, malnourished, or ill, as well as being unable to function due to being crippled, malformed or mentally inadequate. The shelter operates as a half-way house once the children are able to function adequately permanent homes or institutional placements are found according to his/her needs for education, continuing therapy or home surroundings.

> The psychological and social aspects of this program are crucial. I witnessed such comraderie and joy among the children in this setting, whereas their fate in Shadow Valley would have been one of alienation and neglect. One room in the shelter is used as the 'day room' where breakfast is served to the children and learning activities take place. Margaret from Wamathina Group is the cook. She is a wonderful house mother to the children. She works under extremely difficult conditions, particularly when food supplies are late being delivered. (1991 log)

There is a home made playground outside with swings made from tires, a wooden climbing bar, and two little huts with grass roofs. The area is fenced and the children spend several hours a day outside. Sometimes clay is provided and the children enjoy creating clay figures. There are no toys but a lot of singing and dancing takes place.

I was involved in the difficult process of pleading for placement of some of the children in schools and institutions. Three of the incurable multiply-handicapped children have been accepted into Mother Theresa's Home (one is little Esther described in Chapter IV); three physically handicapped children now stay at Dr. Barnardo's Home For Crippled Children; two have received placement in Joytown School; two orphans have been adopted into

families and are attending regular schools. There are seventeen children at the shelter at the present time. There are two 'dorms', one for girls and the other for boys. The children sometimes double up on the mattresses and this is no hardship to them as they are accustomed to crowded conditions.

I was able to see the difference we have made in the lives of these children. In the two years between my visits they have grown to be healthy happy children. There is a great need for this kind of program in slum areas. Without this program these children would probably either die or beg for a living.

e) Community outreach program

The community outreach program provides an ongoing link with the community in Shadow Valley. It also helps the families of handicapped children who cannot be accommodated in the shelter. On Tuesdays and Thursdays two of the shelter staff visit various families in the valley and speak with people about any crisis which may have occurred (e.g. fires, floods, family violence, births, deaths, etc.). By entering the slum on a regular basis our staff are able to remain visible, trusted, and aware.

f) Staff housing

Some of the project staff (the manager, the cook, the child care worker, the farm man, and the driver) live in the shelter building. These people are needed on site. Beside their regular staff duties, they share their lives and activities with the children living in the shelter.

g) Street children's camps

The children and teens register themselves for an entire year of monthly camps. Once a month about forty children arrive at camp on Friday and stay until Sunday. Some of the camps are held at the shelter building, but sometimes the camp travels to a boy scout campsite, into a rural area to climb a mountain, or to the

ocean.

> I am always amazed at the impact made during the youth camps. It all seems rather impossible. A wide range of children show up for these camps (6 to 21). Most of them are the offspring of the women in the groups. My partner, by some miracle, is able to attract those who are 'unreachable' in the community and keep them interested and involved in the activities. They not only create morality plays of tremendous depth and significance but also take part in debates, craft making, games, and sports. And interwoven in all these activities are lessons in cooperation, leadership, and responsibility (1991 log).

h) Store (kiosk)

One small room at the front of the building serves as a shop and sells items such as flour, sugar, milk, bread, candles, and salt through the window. The customers are local people living in the surrounding community. The shop is operated as an income-generating component of the shelter. The sewing girls assist as clerks and even the handicapped children take turns as assistants and learn to count their shillings and speak to the public.

i) Crafts production and marketing

Nahui is in charge of the crafts program. He joined our program in 1987 as a street boy with a speech impediment and plenty of street experience. He has outstanding talent for acting in the drama program. He has proven to be courageous, joyful, and invaluable as a night watchman, a farmer, a craftsman, and multi-purpose workman. He has gained self-assurance, skill, and dignity.

Nahui uses one of the upstairs rooms to store and display various craft articles made by himself, the women and the teens. Some of the crafts are sold to visitors at the shelter, others are sent to Canada to be sold here by volunteers at bazaars and bake sales. All profits go back to the project. Handling the crafts is

time-consuming in both countries -- at the shelter they must be made, sorted, selected, priced and transported; in Canada they are listed, sorted, labelled, priced, packaged, and distributed to various volunteers for selling.

j) The "Farm"

This is the latest addition to the project and the final part of the original 'vision' (Appendix A). It began by having a few chickens at the shelter to provide eggs and chicken for the children to eat. In 1991 a woman who owns a small plot of land near the shelter donated the land to the project for use as a 'farm'. Now there is a two-story wooden structure which houses chickens, pigs, goats, and one rabbit.

k) Central project office

One room in the shelter serves as the central office for the project. From this office the components of the project are coordinated and managed. Here all records are kept and business carried out. Administration and direction of the project is supervised by my partner. (The desk doubles as a therapy table for the handicapped children at times). There is now a telephone although it has not worked much of the time. There is an old typewriter but no modern equipment such as a computer or fax machine. Records and reports are filed here (there is a file for each child, containing his/her medical, family, and educational history).

There is a small library. Several shelves contain books for educational purposes such as literacy and health.

There is an old pick-up truck which serves as a multi-purpose vehicle. It is stored inside the shelter at night. It transports people, supplies, food, equipment, and animals (at times a combination of all of the above). The schedule of the old project pick-up truck is carefully planned each day because it is the only vehicle available to all the staff.

CHAPTER VII STREET BASED EDUCATION

> Authentic (development promoting) education begins in love, a reaching out from the heart to heart. . . . The educator is not one who knows and is thereby granted power over others who do not know. The educator is a developing subject and with other developing subjects, engages the universe in dialogue (Bopp 1985, p.219)

The education groups have evolved directly from hearing the voices of the women, seeing their daily lives, and feeling their sense of community. The method is defined as "street based" because: (a) it takes place within the actual community where the women and children reside; (b) there are no formalized rules and no registration fees or other costs to the participants; (c) the learning format is created in order to answer the needs of specific goups for information related to their daily lives; (d) the location of the education groups is relevant to the location and transportation requirements of the participants, and the accessability of resource persons. This chapter will discuss the underlying philosophy of these informal education programs;and will present a few examples of actual street based learning experiences within the project setting as recorded in journals and project reports.

A. Setting Realistic Boundaries

The first need was the right to meet and discuss ideas. For some of the groups the process of exchanging stories, identifying primary needs and taking initial cooperative steps took several months of meetings. We made it clear that our most important resource was ourselves, the women's groups, the energy and will power of each individual. We can imagine, envision, and create.

When poor people are asked to envision an 'ideal future' they may begin with a dream of wealth. The women's image of wealth was the image of the white foreigners in their colonial houses. This is a natural response and can be openly discussed. My partner

and I realized that discussion of what wealth looked like to the women was an important starting place in identifying the difference between real needs and fantasy dreams. Envisioning ourselves in mansions was not a realistic or healthy goal to aim for but it was fine as a dream. Where are the boundaries of envisioning to be set then and what questions were needed to determine the real needs? The following questions are examples of how needs might be identified in this kind of situation:

What are the problems we see with the 'rich' lifestyle? What is the impact on others in the wider community (and on the environment)? What is the difference between needs and wants? What are needs that every person has? Can we identify our own needs within our own community?

Each of the above questions can take a long time to discuss. It is an important step in the process and can take more than one meeting to cover adequately. This is street based education because it involves a growth of consciousness and a high level of concentration and cooperation.

B. A Philosophy of Street Based Education

Any street based education program should build upon the belief system already in place within the group, because unless the participants feel that their own knowledge and beliefs are valued it is difficult for them to gain sufficient self-worth and self-confidence to trust their own creative thinking powers. Also, unless a facilitator truly admires and respects the people for their vast store of knowledge there may be attitudes of superiority and devaluing which are intuitively sensed (Friere 1983). When participants sense that their ideas are undervalued they are unlikely to bother envisioning, creating or sharing those ideas. This tends to set up the type of oppressor/oppressed dynamic discussed by Friere which in turn leads to what he terms a 'banking' form of education.

As a facilitator I needed to reflect carefully on my own definition of what comprises 'education', and to understand more fully the traditional African learning which has been successful for centuries in tribal societies and which still exists in many areas. An understanding of the original methods of teaching within the culture leads to an appreciation of the strong pull of ancient heritage in African society. Traditional education is an inherent part of the culture and facilitates the village socialization process. The gender roles are very clearly defined and separated -- men become warriors, women become mothers. Education takes the form of play in infancy; little girls work beside their mother to learn to cook, fetch water and wood, find food, make clothing, and tend children; stories, songs and dances tell the history and teach the values. There is a strong sense of the spiritual and mystical aspect of human life, plus deep connections to nature, the earth and the sky. Spirits of ancestors and pride in heritage play important roles.

At puberty the ritual training for adulthood occurs. In most tribes this includes circumcision for both males and females. Even though female circumcision is illegal in some countries it is still widely practised (as is polygamy). These practices have deep significance within the tribal setting and should not be judged in western terms.

> In traditional society daily living was organized around the values and customs of the extended family, clan and tribe. . . . Everyone had his/her place and task within the tribe. Everyone in the tribe knew what behaviour was permissible or unacceptable in daily living. Thus tribal customs, values and moral pressure gave the people emotional, social, moral and physical security. (De Graaf et al, 1981, p. 258)

However, the women in the project must now live in the twentieth century and are faced with an evolution of human consciousness that makes some of the traditional rules unacceptable (e.g., female circumcision increases the risk of AIDS according to

the local health workers). The women express confusion, and feelings of being alienated in the 'modern' society for believing in the 'old' ways, and alienated in the village groups if they refuse to perpetuate the old beliefs (e.g., polygamy and circumcision).

Taking part in the activities which were a part of their daily world was necessary to understand the pressures of womanhood within a deprived setting -- watching the types of interaction between mothers and daughters, mothers and sons, women and men, women with each other. With each successive generation fewer of the 'old' values seem to be retained and more of the 'new' (white) values adopted. There seems to be a tug-of-war between the old and new. The women also complain that the men often adopt the new values for themselves but expect their wives to retain the connection with the 'old' (i.e., the men may be employed in the city and wear a suit and tie but like to return to a rural homestead where the wife and children retain a subsistence lifestyle). Some women see this as a way of keeping the women poor and subservient as well as fulfilling the man's obligations to the ancestors to retain the 'old' ways. They complain that a man may have a younger wife in the city and thereby lead a dual life, but may fail to support the wife and children in either sphere. Some of the women in our groups found themselves destitute in the slum after trying to follow their husband into the city. Therefore the type of learning program they want relates to their lack of previous education and to their desire to adopt new ways of seeing, being, and relating to the world.

An important insight is the negative attitude of the wider community toward the people of the slums. I spoke informally with five separate upper and middle class families who expressed anger and revulsion towards the beggars, the street kids, and the men and women in squatter areas. The belief seems to be that 'they' live like that because they want to; they are lazy, dirty criminals to be feared and avoided. The slum women internalize these attitudes and lose any sense of dignity and self-worth. They tend to believe that because the wider community are educated and comparatively

prosperous they must be "right" in their assessment of poor people as being "no good".

It is true that criminals do sometimes hide within slum communities, and that street children must often resort to begging and/or stealing (the women admit to their knowledge of these activities). However, I have not attempted to ascertain how large a percentage of a slum community can be labelled "criminals". Nor am I able to determine what a "criminal" is. For example, is a woman who prostitutes herself to feed her children a criminal? Is a child who must steal food from a garbage container behind a hotel a criminal? What about the teen who sniffs gasoline, the grandmother who assists at an abortion, or the fifteen-year-old who destroys her malformed baby?

Street based education does not pretend that these realities do not exist, but rather faces the reality head-on. Within this particular project the street scene is learned by the facilitators before programs are put into place, and this learning is on-going while the programs are unfolding within the groups. There must be a two-way caring relationship -- the street people realize that they are in partnership to plan and create the learning programs, and to give support back to the facilitators. This support takes the form of: (a) protection within the streets; (b) provision of community information; (c) help with crisis situations; and (d) trust in sharing daily experiences.

(a) Protection in the streets: It became evident through observation and through discussions with the women that my presence in the community was well monitored by the local residents. There is a 'telegraph' system of relaying information. Children may be the runners/informers. This system was sometimes used to inform the community that I was in fact a friend of the community rather than an enemy -- that I was there as a partner to the women's groups. This kind of protection is sometimes needed in a slum community because strangers are suspected and may be in danger of being robbed or mugged. I have never experienced any

violence to myself but I know of others who have.

(b) Provision of community information: The women shared valuable information about the community and about their daily lives. e.g., what happens during certain types of crisis; how the various tribal groups within the community interact; what happens to children left alone in the shacks; how often are abortions performed and how; whether the women have access to traditional healing methods, etc. Many types of information are helpful to facilitators attempting to plan street based education which will provide useful skills for improvement of lifestyle.

(c) Help with crisis situations: A crisis situation can be widespread (national or international wars or political activity), local (floods, fires, buldozers) or individual (illness, death, birth, beating) in scope. The women's groups have provided assistance in the emergency shelter by bringing food, providing labor, or arranging community support.

(d) Trust in sharing daily experiences: The women took my partner and I into their homes and shared their daily tasks. As well we were taught how to sell vegetables on the street, how to grow vegetables in ditches, how to cook food on an open fire, how to build a traditional hut, etc. This type of sharing assisted us in realizing the types of skills already known, and the vast store of knowledge already in place among the groups. We could then build on this knowledge in the learning programs and refer to the previous knowledge in ways which made the new learning relevant to the daily lives.

C. Wholistic Education and The Four Parts of Self

Our methods are not based on any previous education theories or strategies. There is no formal organization or institution dictating the rules or perameters of our interactions within the community. We are only answerable to the women we are serving.

The street based education programs within the project were

designed as a result of crisis counselling, and in answer to the voices of the participants. This type of approach is wholistic in nature in that there is a conscious effort to recognize and involve each of the four parts of the human being: (a) physical, (b) mental, (c) emotional, and (d) spiritual. In this project wholistic education is based on balancing these four parts of Self:

a) Physical: When the women talk about their physical selves they discuss various problems with their bodies. Often they are living with a high degree of physical pain as a result of poor nutrition, past accidents, beatings, diseases, or infirmities. People in pain have difficulty learning. Women's bodies are vulnerable, particularly if they have had several children and must work very hard physically. As well, they may have inadequate housing/sleeping accomodation resulting in arthritis or pneumonia, or a high level of stress causing headaches, digestive problems, etc.. Some are suffering from parasites, diabetes, cancer. AIDS is now a big problem. Often they cannot go to a doctor or purchase medicines because poor people may not be able to afford adequate health services or hospitalization. Most are illiterate and therefore cannot read about diseases, cures, etc. and must depend on hearsay or rumors. Many of the women feel frustrated that they cannot solve their physical problems. They have been conditioned to believe in 'white' medicine but it may not be available to them. So they resort to the street medicine (i.e. traditional herbal remedies or witch doctors) which may or may not be effective.

Physical needs are a concern in these street based education programs. Adequate attention and time is required to collectively recognize that pain affects the developmental learning process and that these physical needs might be adressed within the community in a way that is non-threatening and confidential. Physical problems may alter as emotional, mental, and spiritual growth evolves. They are all intertwined. The women tend to feel better physically when they begin to gain control over their lives.

b) Mental: Formal education tends to focus on the mental (brain/intellect). Reason and logic dwell here -- memorization of facts and the four 'R's. To be successful in the mental area the learner needs to have confidence that she can, in fact, learn -- and that the learning is useful, applicable. In a slum community the people may have failed in school, or received very little formal education. The women often express the fear that they are too "stupid" to learn. Therefore it may be necessary to give the groups opportunities to prove their ability to think, learn new concepts, develop ideas, and put them into practice.

As explained in Chapter Five this project began with the women forming their cooperative groups, selecting an executive, then making intelligent decisions about their group process. There were discussions where each voice was valued, a clarification of needs issuing from the women's stories, then opportunities offered to develop skills -- self-organization skills, small business management skills, simplified bookkeeping and banking skills, etc. The women reported that they began to feel "in control" of their lives and their households; that their voice could carry some weight in the family; that they had a right to speak up within the community. Once this happened, they decided they did indeed have a brain and wanted to learn more -- about reading and writing, about their bodies, about agricultural skills, etc.

c) Emotional: Feelings and emotions appear to run deep in each of the women included in this project. They explained that the hardships and suffering endured by each woman during her lifetime had festered within her heart. The opportunity to release those feelings was a necessary part of the learning process. It was acceptable within the sisterhood groups to tell the stories and cry openly. There was an understanding that the stories were shared in trust and would not be repeated in the community. There was no pressure to tell secrets or reveal anything emotional, but once it

became evident that emotionality was accepted and respected feelings began to flow freely and became part of the healing/learning process.

The women said that their emotionality is rebuked and belittled by men -- that they are not allowed to show emotions when men are around. They seem to need to freely vocalize their feelings (hatred, anger, fear, joy, love, or sadness) before they can move forward and release the past. Not only at the beginning, but at each stage of the development process the women were encouraged to honestly express their feelings if that felt necessary. Most proclaimed that this emotional freedom encouraged a personal honesty among them that created strong bonds of friendship.*

d) Spiritual: The spiritual aspect is the most difficult to define in academic terms. In education circles there is a tendency to avoid this area except in the realms of philosophy and theology. In Africa I found a very strong spiritual energy. Traditionally the world of myth and magic tended to answer the quest for spiritual fulfillment. Many Africans have recently adopted the Christian or Muslim religious teachings. Within this project there was a careful attempt not to adopt any particular religious direction, but at the same time there was a recognition of the spiritual or soul component of human selfhood. I kept this soul aspect in mind whenever I was learning or teaching. My own soul was developing through the traumatic experiences and I felt instinctively within the women's groups that our souls were communicating when language was inadequate. People who have lived in such close proximity to birth and death often have a deep understanding of spiritual aspects. Wisdom has little to do with book knowledge,

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* NOTE: Because my partner is a trained family therapist she is qualified to handle the strong emotional 'purging'. The process of emotional release is so powerful that there should be a trained person to facilitate this. The process involves positive closure and careful follow-up.

and logic and reason interferes with intuitive creativity (Zukav, 1989). I listened on so many occasions to words of deep spiritual wisdom from women who understand soul concepts which I could not have verbalized in such a profound way.

The old saying, "The eyes are the window to the soul", took on new meaning for me. I could see by the eyes that there was a brighter light within. As the women gained new mental, emotional and physical strength the soul also grew. It was the spiritual aspect of "becoming". It was not something that could be measured in academic terms, or analysed by a psychiatrist. In street based education there is a spiritual aspect that can be defined as meeting each other on a soul level and watching the "spirit soar" (Chief Dan George, 1982). Of course the spirits do not 'soar' continually or all in unison. The very word 'soar' means an up-and-down flight. Spiritual development is sporadic and mysterious. Although changes can be physically visible (i.e. bright eyes and joyful demeanor) there would seem to be a "two-steps-forward-one-step-back" pattern to spiritual development. As an educator I am intuitively aware of the type of energy emanating from an individual (i.e. joyful, depressed, intense, lethargic). It is not something that I would wish to measure or to judge as good or bad. But it is something a group facilitator pays attention to and empathizes with because often an act of love and friendship can cause a wounded soul to 'soar'.

The above four aspects of self are well recognized in Bopp's work with Canadian native peoples (The Sacred Tree, Bopp, 1989). International aid agencies might do well to recognize these four aspects of human development instead of focussing primarily on economic gain through the provision of buildings, equipment, and financial aid. Unless personnel, buildings, equipment and financial support answer human needs for physical, mental, emotional and spiritual growth (and these four in harmonious relationship to each other) the help is perhaps misdirected.

D. Relief Becomes Development

'Relief' is commonly defined in overseas aid circles as charity given to people in crisis where there are no expectations by the donor of a reciprocal response by the recipient (my own definition). The closest definition by CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) appears in their 1986-87 Development magazine: " . . . emergency response when nature puts lives at risk or conflict drives people from their homes" (p.54). Many of the women began by requiring this type of relief service. However, charity sets up a dependency if continued over an extended period of time. I noticed that the women would tend to expect handouts if that is all they received. 'Relief' becomes 'development' (see definition section Ch. III) when the recipients gain an active part in determining their own growth process and are given a chance to contribute their own time, money, energy, and/or knowledge to guide the process. In this particular project relief became development when education began. Education took various forms: (a) group counselling [psychological], (b) friendship [social interaction], (c) community outreach [family life education, child care, inter-age communication], (d) specific training programs [intellectual], (e) street children's programs [Saturdays, weekend camps, dramas]

(a) Group counselling [psychological]:

This project began as a result of information gleaned by my partner in her role as family counsellor for the women from the slum community. As a result group counselling sessions became a part of the education program and dealt with the problems faced by the women and their families.

(b) Friendship [social interaction]:

Friendships within this project form an important link for women who previously felt isolated and lonely due to their poverty. Through their new-found friendships in the groups they learn how to deal collectively with problems in their daily lives. The friendships between Canadian and African

women also educate by means of international understanding, cultural awareness, and information exchange. Friendships are a key method of personal and collective empowerment as well as a learning tool.

(c) Community outreach:

Community outreach is carried out twice weekly by the shelter staff (refer to The Project Today Ch. VI) but it is also carried out by the women themselves. Because they are int touch with many people within the slum community they spread what they learn among others. Therfore they become facilitators in their own right. This is a source of pride and deeper understanding for them of the value of learning programs. An example of this appears in Ch. V Voices in Retreat whereby the women return to their community and teach others how to fertilize potatoes and make natural insecticide.

(d) Specific training programs:

Examples of specific training programs include the sewing program for unwed mothers, the baking program, sessions on banking and bookkeeping for the women's groups, and health and nutrition workshops (see example below). This type of education involves mental work [intellectual], memorization of facts and then application of information. Follow-up is a necessary part of these formal sessions to determine whether they were effective. The women give good feed-back on whether the information was useful and applicable. If the learning was deemed successful by the women then the programs are repeated, if not, they may be eliminated or adapted according to directives from the women's assessment.

(e) Street children's programs [Saturdays, weekend camps, dramas]

The women's constant concern for the welfare of their children led to the creation of programs for the street

children. Beginning with Saturday sessions and expanding to weekend leadership camps the children's camps contain various forms of educaitonal activities such as public speaking (speaking, listening, discussions, debating), dramatization (enactment of life situations), leadership skills, and group dynamics.

E. The Crafts Program

My partner appealed to us to find a market for the crafts made by the women. Besides a way to market their handmade articles they needed a safe place to meet to make their crafts together, and somewhere to store their products. Because the craft market in their own country is glutted, and because the women have no access to transportation or storage facilities we decided to experiment with selling some of the crafts here in Canada.

The crafts were at first brought to my partner's house at all times of theday or night. Sometimes the articles were dirty and poorly made, yet it was difficult to reject their handmade goods. As well, these women needed the money immediately, not at some unknown time when the article was sold. We needed an organized system for selecting items and the women needed an organized method of production and standardization if they were to be successful in their craft selling business. They also required a clean, safe place to store the articles so that they would not get dirty or stolen. Eventually the emergency shelter began to serve these purposes.

However, various learning experiences were necessary in both countries before the world of production and marketing was understood (even on such a small scale). Here in Canada a few enthusiastic volunteers, led by Barbara Cockrall initiated a craft program called Lifeline Crafts. 'Lifeline Crafts' sends all the profits from the sale of the crafts to support the work of the African women. Canadians gain a beautiful artifact, learn something about

traditional culture, and feel pleased to be giving real and direct assistance to families in need. Now the women's groups are using their craft monies to support a chicken project, a market garden, and other small self-help ventures.

This is an example of how relief becomes development. The African pertners are learning to earn their own project income instead of receiving charity.

F. An Example of Health Education

One example of a training session focussed on the request by the women for information about their bodies. The need for health education was expressed adamently by the women on several occasions. The women said that they wanted to know : (a) how their bodies work, why pain develops, and how to tell when pain is dangerous; (b) what causes various diseases, and how to access effective health services; (c) about pregnancy, birth control methods, birthing, and infant care; and (d) the truth about the new disease called AIDS. Knowing that neither Wanjiku nor I were qualified to teach anatomy or physiology, we had been wondering how to afford to pay a doctor or nurse to instruct our women -- most professional people are unwilling to enter a slum.

I chanced to meet two nurses from Australia who had been in Africa for several months, but complained that there had not been opportunities for them to "use their skills in a meaningful way". I told them about the needs of our women for medically trained instructors, and they eagerly agreed to prepare simple diagrams and meet us on the following Saturday. The Kuku group, together with members from Wamathina and Gikabu groups, took part in our Health Workshop.

The following is taken directly from my daily log, and describes that day (March 1987):

At the agreed meeting place we found fifty women

waiting. Magically, a delapitated bus arrived on the scene to transport us to the new Centre for the Health Workshop. The women were so happy, and they sang as we jossled over the bumpy roads, the bus packed to the rafters.

The workshop was a great success. While one group learned basic anatomy the other heard about the wonder of conception, pregnancy, and birth (including birth control methods and menstruation). The types of questions asked indicated amazing ignorance. 'Can you get pregnant without a man?' and 'Is it true women go insane when they don't have sex?' They giggled while hearing the facts about the urinary and rectal tracts, and about intercourse. They hesitated to feel the beat of their hearts or the expansion of their own lungs as though touching their own bodies was forbidden.

Illiteracy means there is no book learning, and they are at the mercy of an unjust health service system with little knowledge of how their body works except 'old-wives' tales handed down through the families. They might be better off with traditional herbal medicine and I am sure that is utilized whenever possible.

The shocking state of the medical system was evident from the comments. It is necessary to carry bribe money. Many of these people need an X-ray, but they can't get one. Even if they could, an operation is out of the question. A doctor (if they can get through the line-ups) will simply prescribe some medicine, unnamed and unmarked. If and when these people are admitted to hospital for emergency reasons there is often two or three to a bed, and inadequate supplies or equipment.

During the workshop loaves of bread were shared and pop served. At the end of the day we all piled once more into the bus, and bumped and sang our way back to Dandora. The women gathered to dance a farewell, and disbanded to wind their way back into the valley. (1987 Log)

This form of street based health education has been utilized successfully on many occasions since. Young mothers gather to hear about nutrition, hygeine, and childhood diseases; teens are taught about venereal disease, AIDS, birth control; older women

learn about arthritis, diabetes, and cancer. This is street based health education. When the voices request information ways and means are found to provide that information within the community setting, either spoken in the tribal language of the group or else effectively translated. The programs are provided free of charge. Costs are kept to a minimum and paid for through the project budget. (Costs may include public transportation to the meeting place, a basic meal for the participants, and an honorarium if a professional resource person is required.)

Key concepts in the educative process are: (a) each individual is valued and respected regardless of age, gender, or tribe; (b) the women are considered to be the 'experts' of their own development; (c) human interraction, open communication, and celebration are given high importance; (d) there is relatively little importance placed on monetary resources compared to human resources; and (e) there is a focus on mental health, emotional honesty, and intuitive knowledge.

As the women's groups became more organized and stable they requested more training programs. They wanted 'instant' education programs -- simplified and practical, not too formalized, using local people as 'teachers'.

They were encouraged to identify what they wanted to learn. Included were the following:

1. How to form and organize themselves into support groups (group dynamics and communication skills).
2. How to keep themselves and their children healthy and happy (child care and basic family health).
3. How to get some money to survive (skills training for employment).
4. How to have a group account at a bank (basic record keeping and financial planning).
5. Crisis management counselling (helping each other when tragedy hits).

The 'lessons' for the women often take the form of workshops

held in the community during the meetings of the cooperative groups. My partner is the primary facilitator. Other resource instructors (i.e. nurse, craft marketer, bookkeeper, youth worker, etc.) were brought in as required to clarify a particular area of knowledge. Hours of work were not counted, nor was monetary value placed on the work. Initially, all project workers were strictly volunteers. Therefore their motivation was interest in and commitment to the work, not monetary remuneration.

Each step was experimental, and the evaluation would be in terms of whether the programs were empowering the women as they themselves had envisioned. Therefore the women became the primary evaluators.

G. Training for the Project Staff

Eight of the African project workers are now paid employees because it is their only source of income. None of them claim to be 'experts'. Most are from the slum district themselves and have become a 'family' devoted to the community. Hours of work are still not counted, as some are 'on call' twenty-four hours per day in the emergency shelter. Persons who would otherwise be unemployed earn a living, gain on-the-job training, and feel personal dignity and group support. As local people became trained and showed talent in leadership they were paid for their services, and became the project staff.

Soon the small group of African staff (project director, emergency shelter manager, community outreach workers, secretary, child care worker, sewing instructor, driver) requested training programs in order to gain leadership skills, record keeping, and management techniques. They took part in many of the women's meetings, learned to keep daily journals and to record the activities and concerns raised within the various groups. At times we were able to afford to send a staff member for short-term training courses or one-day management seminars.

Crisis management counselling was a much needed component, and luckily my partner was highly qualified to instruct the staff members. Staff training was primarily "on the job". Long-term formal training programs are too costly and too time-consuming. At times, resource persons such as nurses and accountants were asked to help, but most training took place in the field, during community programming or at staff meetings.

The staff are people who have a commitment to working with others, and a dedication to their own community. Knowledge and skills come during the daily work. Some helpers move on to other jobs once they have an employable skill level, but that is part of the plan -- to empower people to escape the slum, and therefore we continue to rotate the trainees.

H. Inter-Tribal Socialization

The word 'tribalism' is heard regularly in news from Africa. It usually has a negative connotation. The women in the project groups are very conscious of their tribal identity. Even in the slum enviroment tribal groupings and affiliations are strong. In politics and government circles tribal divisions create conflict and suspicion. The tribe of a particular president in office may be given enormous power in the land while other tribal groups may find themselves relegated to inferior status. Although a white visitor might be unable distinguish between tribes by looking at people's faces Africans can usually distinguish the tribal background of a stranger on the street. Sometimes fears and hatreds of other tribes are learned from birth and therefore run deep in the psyche (Africa is not alone in this as we witness racial prejudice here in Canada).

Because women from four tribal groups are involved in the project it was natural that cultural differences arose as a topic of conversation. On several occasions tribal differences were discussed at length and with intense interest. It was amazing to my partner and I that there was so much admitted ignorance of the

other's belief systems, and so much interest in sharing and understanding. (see Voices In Retreat Ch. VI) At first there was fear and reservation among the various tribal groups, but gradually there was a realization that as women we all shared certain social experiences in common. Childbirth methods were shared, as were male/female relationship problems, child raising techniques, and food preferences.

At the leadership retreats which involved women from four tribal groups the sharing of life stories and songs erased barriers and led to new friendships. The women made such comments as: "I was taught to hate that other tribe because they live differently -- now I am beginning to like them" ; or "I never understood why the Maasai would not dig a shamba until now"; or "I didn't know that women of the other tribes have the same problems we have"; or "I want to learn the songs and dances of other groups" (1989 Log).

One of the big barriers to intertribal networking is language differences. At the 1989 Women's Retreat we were operating in four languages which required a considerable amount of translation time. The women were extremely patient with the translation process. The two official languages (English and Swahili) are not adequate when groups still speak their tribal language. The women from the tribal groups were very happy to teach all of us their tribal greetings and it was fun to learn various words from each language and use these words in greeting each other throughout our time together. This process of cultural sharing gave the women more confidence and pride in their heritage and served to reduce some of the myths and fears connected with tribal differences. It also accentuated my comparative ignorance of customs and languages, making us feel more relaxed with each other. They were valued teachers and I was very grateful of their patience and tolerance.

I. Education of the Researcher

My ignorance of the cultural setting, the language, the entire international scene was, and still is, enormous. But my 'education' is ongoing, and my primary instructors include my African partner, the women's groups, and the street children. I felt a strong sense of being continually 'tutored'. Each day was a 'classroom' of the streets. Powerful learning experiences often forced me to relinquish my own childhood indoctrination in favor of fresh insights and understandings. These lessons can be learned no way other than 'being there'.

> Development is mutualistic, meaning that it unfolds as human beings collaborate as partners. Development is not bestowed. It cannot be promoted from outside the process. It therefore affects and changes the educator as much as anyone else in the process. (Bopp, 1985, p.208)

The women showed me the proper way to tie my khanga (traditional skirt) and how to make chapatis (flour pancakes similar to tortillas). The women laughed light-heartedly at my lack of proficiency in their daily task skills such as husking maize or carrying heavy loads on my back or head. They joked about the time I stood on an ant hill and suffered the consequences.

I continually regretted my inability to understand the tribal languages and tried rather unsuccessfully to learn snatches of Swahili, Kikuyu, and Maasai. The women, however, were extremely patient with the interpretation process, and in fact, expressed pleasure in hearing their words repeated in English because it helped them to improve their English. They are anxious to learn English as it is the language of education and commerce in their country. Nevertheless the process of interpretation meant that my inadequacy had to be taken into account and tolerated.

One of the lessons I needed to learn is how it feels to be a vegetable seller on the streets. From my 1989 log:

At six A.M. this morning Ngugi guided me to the huge central market to observe the buying procedure of the Gikabu women's group. The place is swarming with sellers and buyers. The vegetables arrive in large or small loads delivered by all manner of vehicle from huge semi trailers to man-powered carts. Most of the produce leaves the market on the backs and heads of women, who eek out a meagre survival living selling on the roadside or tramping door-to-door.

I followed Ngugi through the jostling crowd, stepping across barriers built of pineapples, coconuts, mangos, and bananas, and sliding precariously on squashed fruit. People pushed and shoved, and crate-carrying bodies hissed a warning as they bumped me out of their way (an alien white is a prime target, and I began to feel like a trapped animal). The further we ventured into the maize the louder and more frenetic the scene became.

Finally the women greeted us warmly in a corner of the huge cement overhang, and explained the buying procedure while Ngugi translated. The next hour was spent tracking barter for apples, potatoes, peas, tomatoes, and mangos.

The benefit of belonging to an organized group is that the goods can be purchased in bulk and divided among the women. Once their baskets are overloaded they stagger off, the cord tight across their forehead, to try to sell the goods. I tried to lift one of the baskets but it was much too heavy for me. It was picked up and heaved onto the back of a sixty-three year old woman who would carry it for miles through the busy streets.

Apparantly the East Indian women are prime customers because they seldom are allowed to leave their homes. But they also are crafty 'wheeler-dealers' and often order a certain vegetable the day before and then say they have bought elsewhere, driving the prices below cost. There seems to be little respect between the Africans and 'Asians'.

The door-to-door vagetable sellers are exhausted by the end of their long day. They cover many miles. But as an organized group they can divide the selling territory fairly between them, and warn each other of unfair customers. A major danger is being arrested for not having a selling licence. When I enquired about why they have no licenses

> they laughed at my ignorance. They have no chance of getting licenses. You have to 'know someone', or bribe someone, or queue for days in the hopes of being lucky. There is so much I don't yet know!

As a result of this lesson in street selling my partner and I met with the chairwoman of an Asian organization and explained the difficulties faced by the Gikabu Group. The woman shed tears as she listened, and promised to speak with her group members who are the buyers. The vegetable sellers later reported some significant improvements in attitudes at the Asian doorways. The Gikabu women were even invited into homes and given food.

Since working with the groups I have renewed faith in the benefits of women's organizations. There are small problems within these groups as in any group of human beings working together. The key to success seems to be in having a common purpose, a common objective. Effective group leadership is also important. Each group seemed to look to its leaders for strong guidance.

As a compulsive teacher I have a habit of wanting to share whatever 'information' I gain with others. I had a strong desire to bring back as much as possible of the street wisdom. However, the experiences could never be duplicated, even with our modern technology. One must 'be there'.

J. Education for Canadians

Among the partner groups in Canada, as in Africa, education became a major component of the project work. The education component in Canada took many forms: formal presentations were made at education conferences (e.g. WCCI Conferences in Edmonton, Philippines, and Netherlands) to school classrooms (kindergarten, elementary, junior high and high school levels) and in church services (Catholic, Anglican, United, Moravian, and Unitarian). There were also informal group sessions, discussions or craft

bazzaars where education took the form of anecdotal story telling. Written information and brochures about the project were designed, produced and distributed to interested individuals, groups or funding agencies.

School children enjoyed trying out a drum or wearing a Maasai necklace, while adults wanted information about the traditional beliefs and customs -- how do the women live? how do they cook? what do they need? The women's voices were presented to Canadians as a teaching tool. Portions of the tapes recorded during informal meetings in Africa were transcribed and shared with 'sister' groups. Voices were used in combination with the slides so that the actual words from the women were heard instead of my interpretation of the situation. The traditonal crafts made by the women were used in conjunction with photo displays or slides to describe the historical, geographical, cultural, and social environments. The African women's crafts could 'bring to life' the cultures of their origin.

Not to be underestimated was the learning which took place among and between the handful of Canadians who remained intimately involved over several years in keeping the African project going. At times we worked very closely and intensely on preparing documents, reports, newsletters, financial statements and the like. At other times it was sorting, tagging, hauling, or selling the handmade crafts for bazaars, displays, presentations, etc. Each person came to the project with knowledge and skills to share with the rest of us. The times of disagreement were few compared to the times of cooperation, collaboration, and mutual learning. There was a deep sense of commitment and caring about our partners in Africa. Often our families felt twinges of jealousy or neglect as we focussed our energy to complete the necessary tasks, but they too learned. The ripple effects were felt in our own communities as well as the African communities.

All this activity was accomplished by volunteers. Even now no remuneration is given to the Canadian partners. I clung resolutely

to the concept of retaining a non-professional attitude. The process in Canada was a gift to our sisters in Africa, and a partnership, not a money-making venture for Canadians. This mode of operation was taxing on the volunteers, therefore I often explained that people were free to be involved for as long as it was 'joyful' then move on to other parts of their lives as needed. ^

CHAPTER VIII HEARING THE VOICES OF THE YOUTH

The voices of the children and young adults of Shadow Valley are not heard in this study in the same manner as are the voices of the women. This chapter will explain why this is so. It will also offer some background information about the lives of the street children, the effects of deprivation on learning, and a list of some possible approaches to informal education programs.

A. Learning About the Children From the Mothers' Perspective

The children and grandchildren of the women in the slums are "street children". Some are orphans or runaways -- there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of orphans in this particular slum. The children may never know who their father is. Therefore if the mother dies or disappears the child becomes orphaned. My partner related the story of one mother who died recently while sitting beside her water pail -- she simply closed her eyes and passed away. Women age fast here. Children left to live alone might be assisted by other women, but it is difficult to give when there is not enough for your own children.

Once again we depended on the voices of the mothers to lead us to an understanding of the children. The women in the project groups (Wamathina, Kuku, and Gikabu) are continually distressed over the plight of the children in the slum community. Most have experienced street life from an early age, and few can afford to continue in school. There is a serious shortage of employment opportunities. The women report that the boys hang around idle and the girls get pregnant at an early age. The mothers watch in dismay as the youth turn to glue sniffing, alcohol, drugs. It is common to see young children with a paper bag held to their noses (a container of petrol). The women lose control over their children (in the sense of guidance, supervision, etc.) when they have nothing to offer them in terms of adequate housing, food, or education.

There seems to be very little open communication between mothers and their teenage offspring (particularly with the sons)

even though there are often strong family loyalties. Traditionally there are taboos surrounding inter-generational contact and the women complain about losing touch with their children. In answer to the women's requests my partner agreed to get to know these young people and find out what they are thinking. However, gathering street children is like gathering quick silver. We could never guess how many would appear; the younger ones are curious, but suspicious and afraid; the older ones have their own lives and may avoid contact with new groups. My partner was experienced in counselling families in distress but the furtive behavior of the street children was beyond her experience. As an outsider I could not (particularly in the early stages of the project) grasp the cultural intricacies, and instead focussed on the feelings of the women and the fears of the children, which paralleled what I had experienced myself in raising four sons. I tried to understand what it must feel like to be a child looking out of the slum at a city of wealth and seeing no way out of poverty.

When we first began bringing the children and teens together in groups we realized that they are wary of strangers, perhaps because they are so vulnerable. These children can be arrested, kidnapped, beaten, sexually abused, etc. They cannot easily talk about themselves or their daily activities. It was evident that we would not learn much from 'interviewing' the children. Even the simple task of introducing oneself and saying one's name to the group was traumatic because many of the street children only have a 'street' name, which can be a derogatory term. The task of getting to know and understand these children through group interaction seemed hopeless.

I realized it would take time to earn their trust. The first step would be to understand better the root causes of their plight and find out what other people of the third world were doing to reach and help street children. Listening to the voices of the mothers gave us continuing insights and the impetus to continue to access the small, and often silent, voices of the children.

B. Street Children: A Global Problem

The migration of the poor from rural to urban areas causes overcrowding in the slum areas. Poverty in the cities is even more dehumanizing than poverty in the rural villages. People become trapped in the squalor of squatter living. Today there are third generation squatters in slums that never existed in traditional communities. The problem of street children is becoming more acute as more and more people vie for less and less available space.

When men and women are jobless the children suffer as innocent victims -- family stress leads to marriage breakdowns, alcoholism, homelessness, violence. Mothers find themselves alone. Once they become trapped in the cycle of poverty there are few avenues of escape. Their children become beggars to try to support the family, resorting to pick-pocketing, and sometimes graduating into robbery or the sex tourism business.

In most major cities of the Third World street children are a common sight. They follow the rich, begging for pennies, and reach their open palms into cars at stop lights. Their eyes tell a story of desperation. They are easily recognized by their torn clothing, bare feet, and furtive behavior. They are seldom seen alone, for that would be too dangerous, but travel in groups of two or more. The group is their support system, and will often contain several siblings of a family. Some "sell" security (e.g. guarding cars parked on the streets or serving as body guards), others sell whatever they can -- candies, stolen goods, or their own bodies.

These behaviors are contrary to the original African traditions which value children as the 'wealth' and security of an African family. For example, according to the traditional African societal rules children are never abandoned -- relatives care for orphans, and often welcome nieces and nephews as family members. Today, with all the pressures of inner city life, the

children may be discarded or mistreated. The women report that alcohol is a major factor in the mistreatment of women and children. One women told me that she wished men would go back to chewing 'mirrah' (a hallucinogenic leaf) because then they would just fall asleep instead of beating their wives and children. I have not included this issue as a major focus in this document, but it might provide an interesting study.

C. Housing, A Fundamental Need

It is important to understand the psychological disadvantage of children who have no permanent place of residence. Many of these children have returned 'home' to find their shack flooded, burned, or bulldozed, or perhaps their mother has disappeared (arrested, fled, or deceased). Many have never known the stability of a family residence. It is a reality which is foreign to most of us.

Permanent housing provides human beings with more than shelter. A home gives children a stable base, feelings of security and protection. Children who have never known a permanent place of residence cannot develop the roots or ties normally associated with growing up. Alexander (1985) describes the housing process as,

> . . . the fundamental human process in which people integrate their values and themselves, in which they form social bonds, in which they become anchored in the earth, in which the houses which are made have, above all, human worth, in the simple, old-fashioned sense that people feel proud and happy to be living in them and would not give them up for anything. (p. 286)

D. Ethics In Street Life

Radha Burnier, International President of the Theosophical

Society recently is quoted in the Feb. 12, 1989 Standard (a local newspaper) as saying, "Culture implies a right perception of one's own role and relationship with events, with people, and with the complexity which is life, and acting according to that perception with dignity and refinement. It is the conscious awareness of relationship and values."

Street people develop a distinct culture in order to survive within their environment. One might argue that street people do not act "with dignity and refinement", but certainly they do refine their culture, and I found that the women and children of Shadow Valley had immense personal dignity. In fact a friend of mine who shared a day in Shadow Valley commented that she found the dignity and honesty refreshing after the social confusion in the "outside world".

Often, a ten year old child supports several siblings. It is no wonder, then, that some of the children go to live in the streets as soon as they are old enough to find food and earn a living (e.g. through begging, pick-pocketing, or prostitution). Their 'income' might be distributed to the other members of the family, or to their street group. The sibling support system is traditional, and the obvious affection between brothers and sisters is touching to outsiders. Girls of five carry their little brothers and sisters around all day. Big brothers feel a strong sense of responsibility for their younger siblings, and in fact often retain that responsibility until death.

I visited a tiny mud house where six orphans live alone. The oldest girl (who is blind in one eye) was helping the younger ones to read at the same time as knitting a sweater for the smallest child. A church congregation had been supporting this family, and the girl attends school as well as caring for all her little brothers and sisters. She explained how difficult it is to afford the school books when the authorities change the texts every year, making it impossible to hand school books down to the younger children. The higher the level of education the higher the school expenses,

rendering secondary education a virtual impossibility for most of the poor. (The issue of school texts being changed yearly would be cause for public debate in Canada but not in a third world country where any policy set by the government is not to be questioned, particularly by the poor.)

The street people do appear to have what Burnier (1989) describes as "consciousness of relationship and values". Their consciousness is in accordance with their daily experiences. There are rules of conduct, and ethics of behavior. For example, in a country where thievery is common, I saw sacks of vegetables left on the roadside by locals without fear of having them stolen. "You don't steal from your own people", the women tell me. There is an unwritten 'law' that those in need support those in need.

I enquired about the street chickens and goats, and why they are not taken for food by some of the needy people. That again would be contrary to the code of ethics. Anyone caught stealing another's goat or chicken, even if it is wandering free, would be dealt the harshest of gang punishment. On the other hand, it is acceptable and even desirable to steal from the rich, in order to 'balance' the unjust inequities. Viewed in their context it makes sense. These people see themselves working harder and longer than the rich, and yet receiving little or nothing for their efforts. They may view the 'whites', particularly, as lazy and arrogant, deserving of the thievery.

E. Effects of Deprivation on Learning

Facilitators need to be aware that effective education cannot take place when a child is suffering from the effects of extreme physical, social, and emotional deprivation. Early factors in the life of the child such as the health of the mother during pregnancy, nutrition and health during infancy, living conditions, and family relationships can affect the child's ability to develop, to think and to learn.

The four most important factors affecting a child's learning capacity are listed by Todare (1977)

1. Family environment including income levels, parent's education, housing conditions, number of children in household, etc.;
2. Peer group interactions - i.e. the type of children with whom an individual child associates;
3. Personality - i.e. the child's inherited intelligence and abilities;
4. Early nutrition and health.

> If a child enters school deficient in all four of the above factors, as many very poor children do, the educational process may have little effect on his capacity for self-improvement and economic advancement. In fact, he is very likely to be among the 50 percent of primary school students who drop out before completing four years. Equality of educational opportunity (a social goal professed by most nations) can thus have little meaning in societies where children come from very unequal backgrounds.(p.236)

Many of the street children, in spite of their environment, have a high level of intelligence. Although they have never taken an I.Q. test it is obvious to observers that they are fast learners, quick witted, alert, inquisitive, and that they possess vast stores of street knowledge.

There are many different types of intelligence besides the ones we test for in our classrooms, as argued so convincingly by McKinnon (1985) in "Education In Development".

> The unitary view of intelligence needs to be gracefully retired now to accommodate a pluralistic conception - intelligences - whereby diverse competencies are manifested in accordance with cultural contexts. . . the infinite arrays through which human beings express their intelligences, and that

> these intelligences must be released, recognized and enhanced as valid expressions of humanity.
>
> . . . In such intelligences, less attention is paid to competition and differences and more to coordination, cooperation and communality. (p.14)

One particular boy, nicknamed "Chinese" because of his diminutive stature, was only able to attend school for short periods of time each year. However, he rose quickly each time to the top of the class scholastically. Today he is nineteen and unemployed, but a staunch supporter of the teen camps and drama program in which he often plays a 'starring' role as stage comedian. He tells us:

> These camps have changed me a lot. I used to just hang around and get into a lot of trouble. These camps have taught me that I have some talents and I can be a good person even if I am from [Shadow Valley]. I have learned to be able to speak in front of people and talk with all kinds of people. Because I am older than a lot of the kids now I can teach them. And I can speak English quite good. And now I have a lot more friends. (Spoken at the 1991 Christmas party)

F. Creating Programs For Street Children

While education is a basic right in Canada it is still a privilege in most African countries. As is evident from the women's voices (ch.V) the mothers try very hard to keep at least one of their children in school. The costs increase at each age level, therefore most of the street children have had very little formal education. On the streets these children learn what they need to know in order to survive (e.g. how to find food, how to find shelter, how to find shillings, how to fight for territory, how to avoid being caught, etc.)

Those of us who try to reach the street children through

providing education might first want to: (a) listen carefully to determine what stores of knowledge are already in place, (b) ask what the children want to know besides what they learn on the streets. As facilitators some self-examining questions might be useful: e.g. What are we educating for? What are our expectations? What are the possibilities for these children? What do they and their mothers envision for them?

Each faction of society may envision something different for the street children. For example, according to one middle class women, "The street kids are a nuisance, an embarrassment and a danger to our own children." But when questioned further she did not want them in the same classroom as her own children, nor in her home. "They should go somewhere and learn how to live a decent life."

There seem to be basically four types of street child programs presently in place in third world countries:

1. Removal of children from the street environment to privately funded schools, homes, or institutions. Often these programs are sponsored by church groups and therefore religious-based (e.g. CARITAS home for abused girls in Manilla, SOS homes, orphanages, etc.)

2. Outside financial support or sponsorship of individuals or families within the slum community (e.g. Foster Parents Plan, etc)

3. Organized rehabilitation day programs and recreation classes sponsored by agencies in the outside community (often in churches or community halls outside the slum community). The children walk or take public transport to the facility.

4. Programs within the street environment which may be informal (e.g. Dalgleish bicycle program, soup kitchens, etc.)

The fourth approach, programs within the street environment, seem to be the most rare. Possibly the reason for this is that the slum environment can be extremely unfriendly and uncomfortable. It takes courageous and unique individuals to work on the streets where the children exist. These programs are the

least publicized and the most difficult to research and document. Often the work is considered by a government to be 'subversive'. Empowering the poor is considered to be threatening to those in power if the poor are the majority in a country. Nevertheless it is questionable whether anyone is capable of understanding the worldview of a street child unless they have lived with that child in their environment, heard the daily conversations, seen the interactions, shared the food, slept on a sidewalk in the rain, and felt the fear of being an 'illegal' human, as well as the shame of resorting to begging.

The project described in this report has tried to utilize a combination of the above approaches: (a) Community outreach whereby local facilitators visit twice a week in the community and interact with all age groups; (b) Saturday programs taking place in a compound on the edge of the slum district. We began by bringing the street children together on Saturdays for discussions, lunch, games, films, art, music, etc. This Saturday program was expanded into (c) monthly weekend camps outside the slum environment.

The various activities which were organized in these programs were originally developed in answer from the voices of the mothers. As issues arose to the women's groups regarding the problems of their children we tried to answer those needs by providing the children with activities. For example: the children were hungry, so plenty of food was provided as a first priority; the children were afraid, so fun and laughter was an ingredient; the older children needed a mode to communicate, so drama became that mode. The following Chapter focuses on the drama program as the primary communication medium of the youth of Shadow Valley.

The formal theories of education studied so intensely during my years of teacher training were set aside. When called upon to reflect on the "curriculum" I found that we were including the following basics in the street based programs, but not in any pre-

planned fashion. Upon reflecting on the 'lessons' being taught and learned during the children's camps I realized that the values and attitudes often came from the children's dramas, which were enactments of situations. These issues were then identified, vocalized, and clarified by the facilitator. The children and teens then recognized their own issues and were encouraged to discuss, debate, or re-enact these issues in various ways. The following principles guided workshops, dramas, group discussions, and story telling:

1. Imagining the 'worlds' the children might encounter during their lifetime, inside and outside the city. What to expect, what to look for.

2. Allowing and recognizing feelings and emotions. (happy/sad; mad/glad; love/fear; jealousy/empathy)

3. Acknowledging relationships -- relating within a family, a peer group, with authority figures, with members of the opposite sex.

4. Understanding and accepting that all humans are the same in some ways and different in others. Respect for differences, respect for life, and respect for self.

5. Recognition and expectation of the various stages in life, and of the concept of past, present and future, so that living in the present, building on the past, and planning for the future becomes a part of consciousness and action.

6. Understanding the causes and effects of various attitudes, behaviors, policies, and societal rules on individuals, groups, and the environment. Understanding differing moral values, and making responsible decisions.

7. Recognizing and developing personal gifts and talents. Respect for the gifts and talents of others.

8. Posing questions. Finding information. Determining whether information is constructive or destructive, true or false.

9. Envisioning and then creating the future -- Goal

setting, expectations, possibilities.

In the following chapter a few of the children's dramas are outlined and the above principles identified within the dramas.

G. Experiments in Learning

Originally our idea was to gather the street children together in order to discover what their needs are. When it became obvious that they could not verbalize as could the women and that they did not want to sit around discussing their needs a different approach was needed. Even the Saturday programs were not altogether successful because too many children would show up and there was insufficient space or time for them. My partner decided to take the risk of trying a weekend camp beginning on Friday and ending on Sunday. A boy scout camp ground was rented for this. The street children were notified of the plan through the women's groups. Fifty children were registered. A few volunteers assisted with games and group activities. This idea expended into a monthly program with each group registered for an entire year of camps. This gave continuity. Once the youngsters understood the procedure followed at these camps (rules of conduct and group activities) they could create more and more ideas for themselves.

The camps sometimes take the form of trips to rural areas, and offer new friendships, new skills, learning, and fun. The street children love to learn about nature and explore grassy areas because slum areas have no grass, trees, birds, or indigenous animals. Children who have not smiled for weeks were seen to laugh at a monkey or a grasshopper. The child's spirit seems to be awakened in this freeing atmosphere.

All steps in the process were experimental in nature. We watched and listened for feedback from the children and from their mothers. Success was measured in terms of happiness, self-assurance, creative use of information, attitudes, and home behavior.

For each of the Saturday programs or weekend camps a particular theme is chosen, e.g. "Love and Friendship" or "Past, Present and Future". The theme is announced on the Friday evening of the camp and the planned activities include some aspect of the theme. On Friday evening eating is the first popular activity. Following the meal the children have an opportunity to choose certain activities for the weekend and are encouraged to take responsibility for the process. They can choose their own groups but sometimes the groups must contain an equal number of boys and girls or one person of each age level.

Once the groups are chosen they begin to plan an entertainment act to give as a 'gift' to the audience (rest of the groups). The Friday evening becomes a stage show with singing, dancing, plays, or circus acts. Before bedtime the camp rules for sleeping, eating, personal conduct, and territorial boundaries are carefully explained. Everyone then finds their blanket and pillow in their hut and tries to catch some sleep in spite of the whispers, jokes, and stories.

Saturday is a full day of action. There are group discussions, games, creative crafts, wood and water gathering, long walks or quick jogs, sports, songs, and competitions.

An overview of some of the activities follows:

Art, Music, Stories

Art and music are used as both therapy and skills training. The children are encouraged to be as free as possible rather than focussing on any 'techniques'. If there are not paints or crayons art can take the form of creating pictures in sand, whittling figures from wood, or creating a collage from things in nature (leaves, flowers, sticks, etc.)

The children quickly learn songs and dances from each other. Some could remember the old songs and dances from their village and these have tremendous significance in terms of recognizing and appreciating their heritage.

Story telling serves as an awareness tool and can

clarify cultural identity. Resource persons, particularly tribal elders are best for story-telling. We have found that many of the grandmothers have wonderful stories.

Sports

For physical and mental health, social interaction, and community networking sports offers a heathy outlet. Soccer and volleyball are popular. Non-competitive games such as swimming and round games are included. Much learning takes place within a game atmosphere. For example boys and girls who have been conditioned to think that girls and boys only mingle for sexual reasons learn to interact together on a friendship basis.

Leadership Training, Public Speaking, Group Dynamics:

Learning includes how to organize, how to lead, how to follow. There are exercises to discover which techniques can be used in various communication situations (e.g. role plays). There are also open discussions and group debates about community issues, relationships, planned parenthood, decision-making, leadership, etc.

Communication skills, group management, and leadership skills are very useful for employment. Public speaking increases confidence. Even the smallest children speak. This also teaches the older ones to respect the rights and voices of the young ones. Leaders of groups are interchanged regularly to give everyone a chance to both be a leader and a follower.

Drama Groups:

Drama is the mode of communication most comfortable for many of the street children. Self-taught, the children develop their own plays and often present them for public view (see Dramatizations). This provides clarification of values, social relationships, and interactive communication.

The dramatizations are featured in the chapter to follow.

CHAPTER IX YOUTH DRAMATIZATIONS

This chapter will outline: (a) how drama evolved as a form of communication within the street children groups at the camps; (b) what type of story depictions emerged; (c) how the dramas affected the youth; (d) how the wider community was affected; and (e) what possibilities emerge for further exposure and wider learning.

A. Dramatization Answers a Need

The birth of our drama program for street children arose due to their inability to verbalize directly and their need to communicate (as explained in Ch. VII). We had seen these children in action on the streets and watched their skill in dodging traffic, performing acrobatics or corner comedies in the streets, and evading authority figures in back alleys. They were often observed to be laughing and joking with each other. So perhaps they could display some of their talents instead of sitting in a formal group. At an introductory meeting my partner asked them to identify themselves through making some kind of noise or action. Creative noises and movements began to emerge around the circle. Suddenly a group of young ones stood up and left the room. She was afraid that they had left permanently. However, after a few minutes they re-entered and acted out a mini-drama which was clever and funny. This 'broke the ice' and my partner realized that their chosen form of communication was drama. Ever since that realization dramatic communication has been a primary method of teaching and learning for these young people.

Some street children are particularly adept at this form of communication, while others may be extremely shy and introverted. Within the youth groups there is a whole range of abilities (as

there are in any classroom). The 'naturals' are inordinately talented as spontaneous actors and actresses. They have so much street 'savvy' that they are able to 'become' a robber, laborer, bus driver, old man, a preacher, or a king instantaneously. Their stage presence is energetic and their sense of timing remarkable.

We began by offering a Saturday program which included all age groups (5 to 21) but such large numbers of children showed up that there was insufficient space. Even so the need for this type of program was evident and we began to formulate a long-range plan. A safe place to create and perform the dramas was needed, and a sufficiently spacious environment. Time was also a factor. Sufficient time was needed for these young people to plan and implement their own chosen activities, to develop trust in the facilitators and the drama process, and to learn skills which would carry them forward when they returned to their community. We decided to experiment with a year-long 'camping' program.

A boy scout camp was rented for one weekend per month. The children and teens would arrive on Friday afternoon and stay until Sunday. There are basic huts for sleeping. Most activities take place outside in a large playing field area. Food is prepared communally by some of the mothers from the women's groups, assisted by the older girls. Firewood is gathered by the children and cleanups are collaborative affairs. Adult guidance is provided by volunteers and the project staff members.

These weekends are called leadership camps because the focus is on developing the talents of the street kids to provide leadership to others of their age. This program has operated for three years now and has been very effective. One of the main features is the drama program and this thesis focuses on this aspect as a form of self-help and street-based education. The following is an excerpt for the 1989 log:

> The other 'explosion' has ensued from the monthly leadership camps which [my partner] organizes for the

> street kids. I attended two such camps during this visit, and slept on the floor in a hut with the kids. Again the same excitement about escaping from their daily existence in Shadow Valley. There was a wide variety of learning programs, discussion groups, and leadership development activities; games of skill and fun, with prizes for all; traditional stories, songs, and dances; but best of all, the most fantastic dramatizations, dealing with the issues the children face daily -- homelessness, hunger, violence, alcoholism, drugs, unemployment. And these dramas, created spontaneously, were humorous, poignant, entertaining, and educational. (1989 Project Report)

Most of the dramas are performed in Swahili or Kikuyu languages and translated to me during the enactment. Some plays are mimes needing no translation. Through observation, active participation, interactive communication and documentation I explored the issues dealt with in the children's social dramas (as listed in Ch. VII).

B. Benefits of the Program

Among the benefits of this type of program have been the following:

1. A forum where social values can be expressed and discussed.

Theatre, whether professional or amateur, is a powerful medium of expression and communication. Comedies and satires can contain serious messages to both the conscious and the subconscious levels of the psyche. In countries where freedom of speech is curtailed and the media is restricted local people often turn to drama as both an outlet for their frustration and a medium of communication depicting the underlying truths of their lives. It offers opportunity to examine issues of morality, tradition,

violence, and justice.

2. Inter-age communication among young and older children.

It was fascinating to me to witness the cooperation between age groups. At times the children were randomly divided so that each group contained all age levels. This encouraged inter-age and inter-gender cooperation. They were given 20 minutes to prepare something on a particular theme (i.e. love, friendship, equality). Each child took a part in the ensuing dramas. One little girl was a most enthusiastic "squeeky door". This was her first attempt at playing a role and her group members realized that she was shy and hesitant. The role of "squeeky door" gave her the opportunity to make a noise and as the play unfolded the squeeky door became louder and provided some delightful comedy moments in an otherwise heavy dramatic performance. The audience (myself and a few other adults plus the entire camp population) enjoyed watching the "squeeky door" each time someone entered the make-believe house. In this instance a minor part became a major attraction. The older children in her group congratulated her afterwards and she was very happy.

3. Inter-generational interaction between mothers and youth.

The mothers are encouraged to come and watch the children's dramas once they have been prepared. This gives the youth an interested audience and gives the mothers a privileged "peep" into the lives and thoughts of their often estranged children of the streets. There were impassioned responses from the mothers who suddenly realized the kinds of social pressures their children face each day. There have been new efforts within the women's groups to address these social issues as a result of experiencing the youth dramas. The leader of the Kuku group told the gathering at one camp:

> I feel like laughing and crying both at once when I watch the kids do their dramas. They are so funny and yet the stories they tell have so much meaning

> underneath. I didn't realize these kids knew so much about suffering. I learn something every time.

4. 'Invisible' children become 'visible'. Children who have learned to hide from the eyes of society are now learning how to be visible and interact on an equal footing with 'regular' citizens. During a performance given at a church comments from the church members included the following: "They don't look or act like street kids"; "Hey, these kids are just like us"; and, "They are terrific actors -- we should learn from them."

5. Self-confidence and leadership evolving from the creative process.

Once the children feel free to express themselves through drama they seem to become more free and confident in their own voices and their own ideas. They begin to realize that people are interested in them, that their ideas are valuable, and that they have choices in life. Each child has opportunities to take turns as leader of a group. The facilitators encourage the children to take leadership roles and design rules of conduct. The creative process emerges from the vast imaginations of these children who dream fantastic dreams to escape the drudgery of city slums.

6. Opportunities for the young to educate the old, and for Africans to educate Europeans.

As the children and youth in our project became more proficient with their dramas they began to perform for community groups, church organizations, and overseas visitors. Their dramas provided valuable learning opportunities. The audience not only experienced a panorama of cultural and social images, but also realized that street kids are intelligent, aware, talented and attractive. In August of 1989 six of the children, randomly chosen and ranging in age form 8 to 18, travelled to Holland to entertain an international education conference. This was a major breakthrough. From the log:

When I arrived home I whipped off a quick letter to the World Council of Curriculum and Instruction (WCCI) telling them about the children's social dramatizations. The WCCI Netherlands secretary responded by inviting my partner and I to bring six of our kids to attend their international education conference in the Netherlands (courtesy of the Netherlands Government) to demonstrate the dramas and traditional dances to the two hundred delegates as a form of community education. After a great deal of last minute panic over birth records and visas we all somehow arrived at the Amsterdam airport simultaneously, and two weeks of intensive learning began.

My partner and I were like mother hens with our precious chicks. Some of these kids had never seen carpets, flush toilets, table cloths, or bed sheets. Each moment of each day was exciting. We all [eight of us] discussed the dehumanizing effects of both poverty and wealth; understanding global relationships; and world wide problems such as family violence, drugs, militarism, and unemployment.

The [. . .] troup was the highlight of the conference with their wonderful dramatizations, songs, and dances. The messages were powerful and real, and at the same time entertaining. We proved that kids from the slums can teach high-powered educators about education. Also, the children were able to adapt to all kinds of new experiences, and by the end of two weeks they were speaking English even among themselves (this new confidence in the colonial language renders them more employable in the Kenyan job market). Beyond that they gained new social skills, and increased their feelings of dignity and self-worth.

> However, our big concern was the re-entry process, and readjustment to their home environment. We had long evening discussions about this, and made sure that the kids not only witnessed the opulence of Holland but also the back alleys and the social problems.
>
> A large Shadow Valley crowd welcomed them home, and a re-enactment of their Netherlands performance took place at the weekend camp. The six young people are now being encouraged to continue their education, and to take on leadership responsibilities within the project work. It is too early to say whether there will be negative effects due to their 'outside exposure', but new doors and windows have opened for them and we will assist them in their growth. They have a lot of talent and courage. (1989 Log)

C. Sharing Reality Through Dramatization

The youth have received no coaching or training in acting techniques. I feel that to have done so might have ruined the natural talent used to create the stories and enact them. Sometimes particular social issues arose from discussions and were then used as themes for group dramas (i.e. traditional versus modern lifestyles, family relationships, rural versus urban living conditions, alcoholism, etc.). Examples of themes used in preparing a dramatic sketch might be "love", "friendship", "equality", "happiness". The themes are usually positive rather than negative.

The following are synopses of dramatic plays created and enacted by the youth.

"The Con Man"

Scene 1: (Takes place in a hut in a rural area.) A young man pleads with his mother that he must leave home and go to the city where he will find employment, become rich, and then return

to help the family. The mother warns her son that the city is an evil place full of danger and temptation. She pleads with him to stay and help the family at home. Eventually the mother can no longer argue and tearfully says goodbye to her son.

Scene 2: (A city street) The young man is impressed by the big buildings, the cars, and the stores. He enters an office and applies for a job but the secretary sends him away because he is wearing old dirty clothing.

Scene 3: He decides that in order to survive in the city he must resort to trickery. He enters a market where several customers are purchasing clothing and pretends to buy shoes and clothes, but steals the articles because he has no money.

Scene 4: A stranger asks him for directions and while he points out the way with exaggerated directions and hand movements he is cleverly stealing the fellow's wallet, coat, hat, etc. This becomes very comical and the play ends in laughter. END

Issues: Difficulties of rural living; rural to urban migration; poverty and pressures in the city; stealing as a way of life.

"A Maasai Marriage Arrangement"

Scene 1: (Takes place in a traditional Maasai village) An old man decides to marry another wife. He visits a friend who has a pregnant young wife and arranges to pay bride price for the baby if it is a girl. When the baby is of age she will be his wife if he lives that long.

Scene 2: The baby is born and the old man brings a bracelet for the child as a symbol of betrothal.

Scene 3: The young girl goes to school but as soon as the girl is circumcised and has completed the puberty rituals the parents decide that she must quit school and marry so that the family can claim the bride price of cattle and goats.

Scene 4: The marriage takes place and the young girl takes her place among the other wives of the old man. Soon she has a

child of her own. An outbreak of disease occurs in the village and a district health worker comes but she is chased away because she smells like a foreigner. The village healer is called in and everyone is happy. END

Issues: Traditional vs. modern lifestyles, child marriage, bride price, forced marriage, polygamy, female circumcision, overpopulation, disease control, traditional healing.

"Alcohol Destroys A Home"

Scene 1: The scene is a happy home. The young daughter arrives home from school to say she has been expelled from school because her school fees were not paid. Mother argues that Father went last week to pay the fees. Father admits that he forgot, but promises to go to town, pay the fees, and buy the daughter a pretty dress.

Scene 2: (A city street) The father meets a friend who invites him to have a drink at the local 'brew house'. They visit women who brew homemade alcohol and they become drunk. The school money is spent and the men make fools of themselves.

Scene 3: Father returns to his home with his friend, and when his wife questions him about the school fees he hits her and sends her out of the house. The friend leaves and the father suddenly realizes that he has lost everything because of his weakness. END

Issues: Family relationships, costs of education, alcohol as a social issue.

D. Impact On Participants

One of the primary reasons for beginning this camp program was to give the children a break from their lives in Shadow Valley and on the city streets. I wanted the children to be able to run and play in safety and peace. And I wanted them to experience and

appreciate nature and beauty. This has to do with touching their souls, their spirit of adventure, universal love and respect for living things.

It was also meant to be a learning situation. From their own stories and dramatizations they could gain conscious appreciation for their own wisdom and the wisdom of others. It would seem that the impact of these dramatizations is greater on the older children than on the younger ones. For the children in the six to ten year age range the dramatizations are entertaining and fun. Some of the learnings they gain have to do with (a) being able to think sequentially [what happens next], (b) cooperation within a group [being part of an acting group], and (c) being able to transport themselves into other characters and lifestyles, and (d) becoming visible and gaining self-confidence.

However, the older children seem to be much more affected by the lessons in values and morals. They can take the issues they themselves raised within a drama story and discuss the issues in terms of their own lives. Because they themselves created the stories there seems to be more interest than if the issue was raised by a facilitator. For example, a play about an old man with several wives told of his power and control over the women. Alter the play ended the teens were asked what the issue was:

Facilitator: What was the basic idea in your play?

Chinese: It was funny to see how it used to be in village life.

Facilitator: Do you think this type of thing (polygamy) still happens today?

Florence: Sure it does

Facilitator: How did the man feel?

Anthony: He was happy at the beginning because he had so many wives but then they gave him trouble.

Facilitator: How do you think the wives felt?

Anthony: They wanted to run away but they knew they couldn't so they got together and made him realize that he wasn't being fair.

Facilitator: Our theme this weekend is equality. Was your play about equality?

Anthony: No, it was about inequality, but together the women evened the score.

Facilitator: Do you think women should be equal to men?

Anthony: No

Florence: Yes

Facilitator: Let's have a debate so that all of us can have an opportunity to tell our opinion on this topic. Everyone who wants to make the point that women and men should not be equal go to this side and everyone who wants to take the opinion that women and men should be equal take this side.

All the boys went to one side and all the girls to the other. Each person who wanted to speak was given the opportunity. The older children listened to the young ones and vise-versa. The debate began to heat up at one point so the facilitator announced that now we would all have an opportunity to argue for the opposite side of the issue.

This was most interesting. Suddenly the boys were to take the girls' arguments and the girls had to think from the boys' perspective. Seeing the other side was a turning point, particularly for some of the boys who had been adamant that society would not work if girls were equal. Following this debate they returned to their groups and created a drama called:

"The Brother and the Sister".

Scene 1: A brother and sister both want to apply for a job. The boy says it is easier for girls to get jobs. They begin to argue about whether girls get jobs more easily or whether boys are more employable. Eventually they agree to disguise themselves as the opposite gender and apply for a job. The brother dresses in the sister's clothes and vice-versa.

Scene 2: The brother (dressed as the sister) enters the employer's office. In a high squeeky voice he converses with the man

behind the desk, answering questions about 'her' former experience etc. Finally 'she' is offered the job but with the stipulation that 'she' will have a date with the employee that night. Obviously this worries 'her' but 'she' reluctantly agrees.

Scene 3: The sister (dressed as the brother) enters the office and behaves like a strong man wanting a job. 'He' convinces the employer that 'he' is a good worker and he is given a job.

Scene 4: Upon returning home the brother and sister discuss what they had to do to get the jobs. Suddenly the employer enters to pick up the 'girl' for the date. He sees that 'she' is a man and his hired 'man' is a woman. He becomes very confused and flustered and faints. END

In this play as in many others created by the youth the issues are serious but the plays become comedies. These young actors have an amazing facility for infusing comedy. Almost all the plays become comedic. Perhaps because their lives are filled with sadness, fear and intrigue they use drama as a way of lightening their burden. And yet the issues they deal with are mirrors to the sociological and psychological environment.

Yet another play dealt with cleanliness and authority:

Scene 1: (At a restaurant) The owner of a restaurant is ordering his waitresses around and tells them to go out onto the street and get some customers. They tell him the customers won't come because the restaurant is too dirty and the food is no good. He hits them and sends them out onto the street. In the meantime we see the chef singing in the kitchen preparing food. He uses food that has fallen on the floor and he blows his nose over the food. His hands are dirty and the food is rotten.

Scene 2: The girls bring in two customers who order food but when it comes they are repulsed and run out of the restaurant. The owner tries to convince them that everything is delicious. The customers go and report to the policeman who comes

back with them to shut the restaurant down. A fight ensues. Meanwhile the cook slips some money into the hand of the policemen and he quietly slips away leaving everyone fighting.

In order to create this drama the youth understood about the issue of cleanliness in eating places, the right of customers to rebel against unfair treatment, and the issue of bribing authority figures. In subsequent discussion about how they felt while playing their parts the cook said it was a lot of fun to be the comedian in the play. The owner said he felt powerful over his employees, and the customers said they felt sick when the imitation food was served. They said they knew of some places in Shadow Valley that serve rotten food to customers, and many cases where waitresses are treated harshly.

The impact of these plays on the participants seems to be increased awareness of issues in their community and increased confidence to speak up about injustices. It is impossible to measure to what extent the children internalize the lessons and values inherent in the dramatizations but they have become far more capable of identifying the issues and discussing them among themselves. Another clear indication of individual development is in leadership and group cooperation. The children have developed their leadership abilities and are able to quickly organize themselves for activities and arrange themselves to complete a task, whereas at the beginning of the camp year there was confusion and shyness when it came to taking on responsibility for group activities.

The women report to us that their children and grandchildren are happier and more capable since joining the camp program, and that they wait impatiently all month for the next camp to take place. On occasion we have had to cancel camps due to crises in the community or lack of funds for a particular month. The children have been extremely disappointed when this occurred. The fact that they come gladly, take part willingly, and accept their

responsibilities for work at the camp indicates to me that these camps are worthwhile. I have seen some astonishing transformations in some of the children. They begin the year looking like frightened little wild animals and end the year looking and speaking openly, unafraid to interact with all ages. My hope is that these children will be able to make a difference in their community and find a life pathway out of Shadow Valley.

E. Impact on the Wider Community

One of the ways this program impacts on the families is that the mothers are able to take a brief rest from worrying about where their children are during camp times. Even for this short time the women express their gratitude. They also tell us that the children come home very happy and tell stories of their time at camp.

Some of the older youth have graduated from the camp program to take employment positions. They have said that they feel they would still be on the streets if they had not learned how to conduct themselves, take responsibility, and speak up for themselves. Three of the youth have taken positions as staff members at the emergency shelter. Because they understand the culture of street life they are invaluable as community outreach persons.

Now the older dramatists are beginning to be invited to perform their plays for community groups. They have so far taken part in three performances outside Shadow Valley. This conscientizes the wider community that Shadow Valley people are not to be hated and feared; it also teaches people about various cultural values; as well it is enjoyable light-hearted entertainment with underlying lessons.

F. Drama As Global Education

As explained earlier in this chapter six of the Shadow Valley children travelled to a large international education conference in Holland, proving that they are capable of handling large crowds and foreign environments. They conducted themselves with dignity and intelligence. Perhaps this leads the way for other street children to become global educators through drama, song, and art of various kinds. I would like to see our street children given more of this type of opportunity. It would be an excellent experiment to have drama exchanges for street children from several countries teaching the rest of the world about the issues they face.

CHAPTER X REFLECTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

> The contribution of women's thinking . . . is a different voice, a different way of speaking about relationships and about the experience of self. The inclusion of this voice changes the map of the moral domain. Listening to girls and women, we have come to listen differently to boys and men. And we have come to think differently about human nature and the human condition, and in turn, about psychology and education, disciplines devoted to understanding and improving human life. (Gilligan, Introduction)

This Chapter serves two primary functions: reflection on the philosophy behind the work, and an overview of some of the difficulties encountered during the six-year time period.

A. The Philosophy Revisited

The philosphy behind the work is based on a female (yin) way of seeing, and is therefore wholistic and nurturing in belief. There is a trust in the "knowing" of each person, in hearing each person's story as 'truth' and in sharing as interconnected partners on a journey in time. It is in line with certain of the new age principles (Friere 1983, Capra 1982, Furguson 1985, Zukav 1989) such as the following:

1. Old methods of education, government, religion, economics, and health services are outmoded for today's world. This project has to do with all the above areas. The slums are growing in size; government systems are collapsing; women's voices are becoming louder. New ways of seeing and being are required. Therefore our generation and the next will need to have the courage to create new systems at every level. The women and chidren in this project are learning to imagine, envision, and create new systems for themselves.

2. Religion, metaphysics and science are blending together. Spirituality has a more practical and personal meaning to each individual.

Because the soul is not measurable, palpable, or visible and has

never been scientifically proven to actually exist, western academics often steer clear of this topic. Eastern societies and aboriginal cultures appear to be more attentive to the spiritual aspect of the human psyche. Western teachers may tend to avoid dealing with the spiritual aspects of learning and personal growth because religion has been confused with personal spirituality. Religions offers one type of outlet for the spiritual dimension. But spirituality in the universal sense has little to do with religious dogma or specific belief systems, and more to do with the soul of every human.

> Each human being has a soul. The journey toward individual soulhood is what distinguishes the human kingdom from the animal kingdom, the vegetable kingdom and the mineral kingdom. Only the human kingdom has the experience of individual soulhood. That is why its powers of creation are great. (Zukav, 1989 p. 175)

Within this project we recognize a need to balance the four parts of Self (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual -- refer to Ch. VII). The spiritual aspects of the programs are intertwined with the other three aspects. We recognize that each woman and child needs 'food' for the spirit. This may take the form of: acts of caring and love; hugs and touching; recognition of beauty in nature; quiet meditation; singing and celebration; non-sectoral forms of prayer or thanksgiving; sharing of special insights. The spiritual component reaches a deeper level than the other three. We have found the need to include a recognition of spirituality apart from religious activities because whereas formal religion may answer the spiritual need of some it does not for many others. Many people do not belong to any church but every human has a spiritual aspect.

We create procedures to match whatever crisis is brought to us. If overseas work is to be human based there would seem to be a need to recognize the development of the human soul, not just the pocketbook and the commercial sector. Zukav (1989) recommends

moving away from logic and reason towards a multi-dimentional approach.

> When the achetype of spiritual partnership -- of individuals joined in equality for the purpose of spiritual growth -- emerges at the level of community, it creates values and perceptions at that level that reflect those of the multisensory personality. . . . individuals that join in spiritual partnership at that level of organization, city, nation, race and sex infuse the collective consciousnesses of these levels with the energy of spiritual partnership, and create new values and behaviors at these levels. (p. 165)

3. All persons are 'right' according to their experience and daily reality. In the past being 'right' has been polarized with being 'wrong', corresponding with the concept of 'good' and 'bad'. Proof of 'rightness' is demanded in scientific and medical circles. As a new 'right' appears the old 'right becomes 'wrong'. Whereas it can be argued that 'rightness' has it's place in the ' hard' sciences, within the mileu of social sciences the polarization and judgement of persons or behaviors as 'right' or 'wrong' has become unpopular due to the evolution of psycho-social disciplines [Rogers, 1961]. A new age paradigm discourages dichotomy (right/wrong, good/bad) in favor of unity (understanding and acceptance of a variety of values and beliefs) [Zukav, 1989].

In this project the people of Shadow Valley are accepted as being 'right' in their assessment of their needs and evaluation of their own development. Therefore it follows that they are 'good' (in our polarized terminology) human beings who deserve the same rights and priveleges as others.

4. We can take responsibility for our own health and actively participate in our own physical, mental, emotional and spiritual healing.

There is substantial documentation to demonstrate the power of

the human mind/spirit in self-healing (Cousins, 1981). Throughout history women have had extraordinary powers of healing (Stein, 1986) and were burned as witches for it. The African women of the slums are amazingly capable of self-healing once they realize that they need not depend entirely on Western medicine or modern cures (which are not readily available to them anyway due to cost).

Healing is a central issue in the informal education groups. The participants/recipients of the programs not only have many physical infirmities (due to illness, malnutrition, neglect, and battering) but also emotional and mental illnesses. There is a need to gain personal strength and involve all four aspects of the person (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual).

The simple act of gaining a support network of other women often brings sufficient confidence and inner joy to heal physical and emotional ailments. It seems that once a person feels worthy of good health and clear thinking it tends to become a reality for her. The women explained that they had been under the impression that their bodies did not really belong to them -- men had the right to 'own' them, doctors had the right to 'heal' them. Now they are beginning to take responsibility for their own bodies and to learn how they function and what is required for healing various physical and mental ailments.

5. Risk is inherent in change. Change is spawned by creative ideas. Change is often frightening because the future is uncertain in a changed situation. But for people who are struggling to survive change represents hope. This project is concerned with change, and the courage of those who are willing to imagine new concepts, to envision a different reality, to share innovative ideas, and then work together to create the changes. Therefore, thinking and acting "on the cutting edge" is encouraged.

B. Diffficulties Encountered

It is important to illuminate pitfalls and difficulties in addition

to analyzing successes. In this section I have offered for consideration a few of the difficulties encountered along the journey.

1. Initial Expectations

Working within overseas development projects can sometimes sound deceptively romantic and glamorous. The idea of working in a foreign country and helping the less fortunate appeals to the adventurous spirit or the idealism of youth. My original mandate sounded rather self-righteous and self-assured: "To help them develop self-sufficiency projects, to learn marketable skills, and explore alternative surivival techniques". The women soon educated me. The enormity of their social and economic problems rendered my pre-planned ideas horrifyingly inadequate and arrogant. Who was I to prescribe for them? It was humbling and frustrating to view the deprivation and the personal burdens carried by the individual members of the groups. I felt hypocritical (because I was free to leave) and yet responsible (as a free agent) to answer to the inequities and injustices which seemed so unecessary in a world of plenty.

Developing a partnership between two cultures at such a distance was the challenge. Co-creating a plan of action which was in tune with the reality of life in the slums and at the same time satisfied the 'western' analytical framework was a constant challenge.

Here in Canada there was an expectation that our directives regarding efficient allocation of funds, record keeping, reports, etc would be met by our African partners. In Africa there was an expectation that money would be easy to access in Canada and that as the project expanded the funds would be readily available because the need was obviously so great. Neither of the above expectations were met easily. Finding time and tyepwriters to compile reports and keep records is difficult in a slum setting. Accessing donations and government funds takes a great deal of

hard work. This type of inter-cultural expectation arises from a lack of knowledge. It is important for overseas partners to travel to the other side in order to learn the realities and limitations faced by the partners.

Access to funding is a competetive game. There is a limited amount of overseas aid money to be shared among hundreds of NGOs (Non-Government Agencies). Agencies must therefore present their development plans in a success-oriented mode which may or may not be in tune with the voices of the local people. Difficulties and mistakes are seldom admitted and might never be investigated in terms of a valuable (and therefore joyful) learning experience. If overseas aid agents shared more information about difficulties encountered and mistakes made there might be less duplication of services and more efficient management of resources (human, economic, and ecological). There might also be more inter-project cooperation to replace the competitive atmosphere necessitated by present funding policies.

2. Dealing At A distance:

Long-distance communication means that things take a relatively long time to accomplish and issues may not be adequately discussed. Written correspondence is slow, time-consuming and often unreliable in third-world countries. Telephone calls can be problematic in a country where telephones are few and far between, or regularly out of order. When there is a ten-hour time difference phoning during the day at one end means phoning during the night at the other. Fax machines are a new method which will make things easier provided that there is: (a) sufficient money for a machine, (b) electricity in the project, (c) adequate repair and parts services, and (d) the office is located in a place where theft is not a major concern. In our case the score was zero on the above list. Aid agents must take distance difficulties into account -- it is not always possible to operate as efficiently as one would want.

3. Time Frames

> "Development takes time. It is not an instant-add-water-and-stir affair. There are long periods of seeming inactivity, as when the anxious gardener waits for the first signs of new seedlings breaking ground. There are set backs. There are dramatic rushes of activity that appear to be final in nature, but the results of which, when the dust has settled, appear to amount to very little. " (Bopp, p.209)

Not only were the two main partners impatient to get programs underway but there was real pressure at each step to solve crisis situations. Crises must be acted upon immediately. When money was spent to save a life that money had to be accounted for to the funding agencies who frowned on funding for 'relief' because that was "not their mandate". Timing was a crucial factor.

The two cultures had differing views on 'time'. Canadians wanted timelines which were concretely adhered to, while in Africa things seldom operate according to schedule. My partner and I could understand the difference in time concept but it was often difficult to explain the delays to those Canadians who had not lived in Africa, and equally difficult for her to explain to the women the time pressures imposed from the Canadian end.

4. Tension Within Groups

There have been small 'p' politics in both the Canadian and the African groups during the evolution of the project. Individuals change and collectives change. As people become "empowered", personal power struggles may ensue. It seemed that as groups became bigger more inter-personal struggles arose.

> If fatalism and risk-aversion account for some of the world's grassroots inertia, social structures account for the rest. The poor of the world are not, as First World myth has it, an undifferentiated 'peasant mass' or a 'sea of need'. Social and economic roles are as intricately stratified in Bombay slums as they are in New York or Berlin. . . . Many communities are further torn apart by

> personality conflicts, factional frictions, and turbulent squables. (Durning 1987 p.159)

Luckily my partner is a trained group therapist and was able to assist the groups when discussions turned to arguments. Minor jealousies and competition for attention, if not dealt with openly, can turn into major fears and resentments. At times, both in Africa and Canada, misunderstandings and miscommunications caused individuals to spread rumours which tended to undermine the project work. Often I fretted about any situation which disrupted the work even though my partner and I had agreed early on to "rise above any petty squabbles". We tried to keep the 'vision' clear for ourselves and for each other. We realized that people in daily crisis cannot always see clearly past their immediate condition. The pressure of poverty is unrelenting and can cause mental and emotional distress.

Stresses on the women's groups were not only of the internal variety: the vegetable sellers, Gikabu Group, faced fines and arrests for selling without licences; the Wamathina women found it difficult to continue in their small businesses due to rising prices and increased regulatory requirements; the little bakery had to close down due to shortages of flour and sugar; and all the groups found it difficult to deal with the banks and keep their record books in order to satisfy the funding agencies.

Durning (1989) reminds us that many of the small businesses are not long-lasting business ventures:

> Unfortunately, the majority of worker cooperatives survive only a few years; their members are generally inexperienced in managing capital and equipment, and they often face volatile markets, skyrocketing inflation, and policies unsupportive of small producers. (Durning p.163)

Sometimes the length of operation of a small business is not as important a statistic as the distance (in personal growth) the participants travelled during the learning experience of operating a

small enterprise within the community. If a small business operation runs for only a few months and during that time the women or youths have learned business skills, banking and bookkeeping, or other useful skills they have accomplished a great deal in a short time. They may then be ready to move on to a different kind of venture. I have seen some small project experiments which failed in terms of financial rewards, and yet they served as a rich learning experience for the participants and in fact catapulted the women into a more successful project.

A part of the project philosophy is that nothing is static, that growth requires change, change involves risk, and risk requires action. At each step in the evolution of the project, changes and adjustments were necessary. It is not possible to impose western-style policies as in Canadian projects. Fluidity is needed to adjust to changes taking place within the groups (individual crisis), within the community (fire, flood, police crackdowns), and within the country (political changes, war, drought, etc.). Often response to these changes involved some form of education -- listening to the problems presented by the people and asking what they needed to learn in order to solve the particular problem in the future. For example: how to prevent the chickens from dying; how to acquire a job; how to grow crops with very little soil; how to buy in bulk or as a group, how to speak to people in authority; how to cure a particular disease; how to deal with a violent husband.

The cooperatives have survived because they could face difficulties head-on and grow past them. When they have a direction to move, they don't remain static. The biggest need during difficult times was a sympathetic ear (my partner) who could implement a growth process for an individual or a group. Working at the grass-roots requires that someone be reachable and flexible. That person was my partner. My role was as the 'middle-man' between a fluid system and a rather solid one (the funding agencies).

5. Difficulties For Women in Development Projects

Aid agents sometimes tend to forget that although overseas agents might be doing the community a favor by developing projects and programs women have stresses and pressures that arise as a result of being involved in our programs. It is important to keep their problems in mind as we work with them:

Time: Some women in the slums simply cannot afford the time to meet with a group. Their days are filled with tasks of survival, such as selling goods, washing clothes, finding food, feeding children, etc.

Energy: It takes energy to interract with others, and women who are exhausted, or ill, find it difficult to change their pattern to include new activities.

Psychological Problems: Feelings of inferiority and worthlessness prevent some of the women from taking part. Group members are encouraged to find women in their community who need a friend, and be supportive and caring.

Husbands: The women who are married complain that their husbands don't like them to belong to women's groups because they might get some "bad ideas". Also, there is a serious problem with alcoholism in Shadow Valley, and many wives are beaten when they return home.

Disappointments: The women may become discouraged if they feel that their projects are not creating sufficient changes in their lives. The desired changes in living conditions and educational opportunities sometimes cannot be created as quickly or easily as the women hope. It is important to monitor the progress of both the collective group and the individual members so that disappointment or disillusion is minimized, and openly discussed.

Inadequate follow-up: Many of the disappointments can be avoided if adequate follow-ups are provided. Follow-up programs should be planned at the beginning of a project, and be sufficiently flexible to allow for changes as group needs and

resources dictate. Group representatives can be responsible for reporting, but regular contact with group members is also required.

Stress among staff: Dealing on a daily basis with such suffering as is evident in Shadow Valley is stressful, and staff burnout can be a problem. The community outreach personnel for these women's groups must be a special type of person -- sensitive and yet strong; sufficiently distant to remain objective yet sufficiently close to remain caring. To minimize burn-out staff members need regular communication with each other, time off for relaxation, and in-service training which provides the type of information the staff persons need to improve in their job.

6. Dealing With Funding Agencies

Once the voices had been heard, and the vision of solutions discussed the creative action phase was put in motion. Several things were required: a multi-purpose building; facilitators for learning programs; health services; and a vehicle to transport people, goods and supplies.

The need for funds became obvious in 1986. I had seen the transition taking place in the lives of the women once there was a vision of something to look forward to, something to work toward (creative action). Now the responsibility weighed heavily on my shoulders to make action possible for them. I was so enthusiastic about the possibilities, and impatient to put the plans into place.

Even though there was no public appeal for funds donors came forward each time a presentation of the project was given in Canadian communities. Next the donated money had to be 'matched' through government agencies (Canadian International development Agency [CIDA] and Alberta Agency for International Development [AAID]). The privately donated funds were immediately available and immediately put to use to rent a multi-purpose building. However, the matching government funding was slow in coming. Numerous

questions were asked: Were we reputable? Were we fulfilling our proposed role? Were the plans sensible and logical?

The answer to this last question was often "no" in the language of institutions and governments. This was a problem. How could I balance originality/resourcefulness with beaurocratic requirements? It did not seem fair to keep the women waiting once they had begun their process of self-determination and group action. The women, being illiterate, could not be expected to write detailed reports or keep proficient financial ledgers.

Time and again in Canada I presented charts, diagrams, and explanations. Only those aid agents who were in touch with grass-roots environments could understand the language of the "wider picture", "intuitive responses", "wholistic community development". I was required to restructure my written documents to make them less "comprehensive", less "relief-oriented", less "based on friendship", etc. etc. I tried to comply with the fashionable development terminology, but at times felt I was compromising my principles for the sake of government funds.

Meanwhile our little volunteer group had no office, no paid staff, no equipment. We certainly felt out of our depth in the sea of international development, but we knew we had the benefit of direct contact with our African partners and we could see that our efforts were resulting in significant changes. Although I was happy remaining small and voluntary there were pressures to enter a more 'corporate' mode. The large agencies seemed to hold so much power while we seemed to be accomplishing a lot with a little. I kept telling myself and anyone else who would listen that "small is beatiful".

> Development agencies, for their part, generally view community organizations as unstable amateurs, junior partners in the serious business of development. (Durning 1987 p.169)

I had no training or previous experience in the area of

accessing funds. Although I was anxious to work with the women and children who needed assistance I was not so anxious to spend months jumping through official 'hoops', completing forms, writing reports (in the language I jokingly call 'aidspeak'), and holding meetings to justify our requests for help. It seemed to be a waste of time and energy considering the immediacy and desperation of the situation in Shadow Valley.

Various kinds of reports and proposals were necessary, plus a non-government agency (NGO) affiliation. At first I associated myself with a large overseas aid agency, but soon we (the five or six volunteers) resorted to forming our own small aid agency and adopted the name of Awareness Programs Society of Alberta. Only after a year of hard work were the government funding requirements met, and the donated monies matched and sent directly to the project. However, this process resulted in important learning experiences for me in terms of dealing with agencies and committees. After all, I reasoned, when tax payers money is allocated there must be tight reins and rules.

> . . . Then there are the government agencies in both countries who in some ways are inhuman systems of control, yet with humans as agents, the connectors, the implementors. And often those agents must make decisions which result in major shifts for overseas projects. Here on the street level those decisions seem to be a world away, in distance and in understanding. Yet I am so grateful for the assistance from all levels because the results speak for themselves. (1991 Log)

The following report which was sent in 1989 to both of the primary funding agencies contains a plea for help in retaining our 'small is beautiful' philosophy while complying with the agency requirements.

> All in all, the [Shadow Valley] Project is thriving ! In fact [my partner] and I, plus the four [African] project workers, their volunteers, the project participants, and,

over here [Canada], our Awareness Programs Committee, are all involved in deciding how to revamp our operation to accomodate the growth of the project. On the one hand our primary objective is to get to the phasing-out point, and on the other hand there are always new things to do. We would appreciate some advice from you if you would like to meet with us, or else you might like to suggest documents or materials which give guidance to overseas projects during transition phases. We want to remain small, voluntary in orientation, and also retain our focus with women and children. Our policy has been to involve the women and youth groups directly, and empower them to form networks and to examine alternative strategies for working together.

A financial report from [. . .], Treasurer, is included. The Alberta AID part of our funding has already been spent, but the 1989 Alberta Small Project (CIDA) funds are still here, waiting for word from [my partner] when they are required. The funds are being allocated intermittently, according to our plan to integrate the various components of the work in a wholostic way, and yet keep separate budgets for each component so that money management and bookkeeping becomes a part of the learning process for the staff persons, volunteers, and participants in each group. We have hired a chartered accountant [in Africa] to keep the project financial records properly up to date.

As you will notice we still have no Canadian office, equipment, or hired staff. Our committee members are all volunteers who work long hours to support the work. A small portion of our budget goes to Canadian education program materials -- Awareness Programs offers at least one educational presentation per month here in Alberta (focussing on global awareness and intercultural understanding). Canadian project visitors and project workers pay their own way and donate their services. At this moment there are two Albertans helping [my partner in Africa].

There was no response to the above request for guidance. I thought at the time that they either (a) did not have time to read

the report, or (b) did not have resource persons available to assist a small organization such as ours.

Another difficulty results from policy changes within funding agencies. Policies and regulations may change from month to month or year to year. It may take a small NGO several months to comply with a rule that becomes altered just when that small organization has managed to produce the necessary documentation. This results in frustrations among volunteers and a feeling that their time is wasted in attempting to access government funding. I feel there needs to be flexibility in regulating NGOs so that small groups answer to regulations according to their own needs (i.e. scaled-down administrative procedures in line with the NGOs' scaled-down resources).

7. Technology

I found technology to be a powerful attention-getting device. Therefore it was both a blessing and a curse, since I wanted my presence to be unobtrusive and natural rather than imposing or coercive. The tape recorder (or camera) imposed one more barrier to solidarity because while I controlled technology I was bringing another form of power and control over the situation. In order to be close to the women I needed to enter their 'world' rather than have them enter mine.

Users of high technology are not necessarily more intelligent and yet there is an assumption that 'they' (technology users) know more then 'we' (others). A person with a camera and tape recorder in hand has the power to capture an image or a voice and use it in another context. Equipment is intimidating and authoritarian in a non-technologized setting.

I knew also that electronic 'gadgetry' were 'hot' items on the streets and might represent to people of Shadow Valley a very real opportunity for a whole term of school fees, or many meals for their family. To them a westerner bearing fancy items was perceived as fabulously wealthy. Many of the children eyed my

camera and tape recorder with longing, causing me to feel even more deeply the injustices and the hardships faced by these people. The equipment reinforced the obvious economic differences between me and them, whites and blacks, foreignors and locals. For these reasons I seldom took the 'technology' along while doing the daily work. I felt much more free and much more human without the 'trappings' of a foreign tourist.

I would suggest a balance between using technological items and allowing time to simply 'be'. While I did find the photos and tapes useful in terms of teaching in Canada, the time spent free of any type of recording device was far more valuable in terms of relating to the real world of my sisters in the women's groups.

8. The Need To Be Non-political

I have little understanding of Africa's political systems, and my partner has little understanding of the North American scene, so we do not indulge in politics. In fact we avoided entering the political arena because it can lead to expectations and alliances that have little to do with community services. When either of us visits the other's country it is on a friendship basis, as a 'visitor' to that country, a 'guest'. I assist my partner with her social work and she assists me with my educative work. Large 'P' Politics is not a field either of us aspire to.

In third world countries work in the slums can be considered 'subversive'. Empowering the poor could result in major change in countries where the poor are the majority. Since local authorities have the power to shut a project down, it seems prudent to keep them adequately informed. One way of doing this is to involve them directly in the activities. Invitations to children's camps and women's project-launching celebrations indicate the openness and community spirit involved in the programs. Local dignitaries can make short introductory speeches or assist in distributing 'prizes'. It is best to have an 'open door' policy and involve business people, etc. when appropriate.

Somehow my partner was able to involve many dignitaries in the everyday activities of the project. The little children are the most honest diplomats. One church dignitary, however, came dressed in a white suit and refused to sit down for fear of soiling his clothing (he had arrived in a mercedes). However, on another occasion a lady who arrived in a pink suit and high heels to visit Shadow Valley wept as she listened to the women speak. By the end of the day her beautiful suit was muddy but she did not seem to notice. She willingly helped us push the volkswagon to get it started. Most dignitaries are touched by what they see and hear. They begin to understand the connection between their lives and the lives in Shadow Valley.

The message here is to be aware of where the power lies in terms of control over project work and rather than join the political arena invite them to enter your arena where (in our case) the little children and the women were the teachers of the 'lessons' in community and collaboration.

9. Religious Freedom

Religious groups have usually been instrumental in the colonization of third world countries. Therefore churches wield tremendous power and influence in the communities where aid agents operate. Religion is a political, social, and economic force.

Our project cooperates with several church groups, but is not controlled by any of them because the people who come for help come from many diverse backgrounds and we did not turn any away, nor try to convert any to a particular belief system. We recognize their right to believe whatever their conscience decrees, and their belief system is never questioned unless it becomes dangerous to others in the group (See story of Kuku group under Difficulties later in this chapter).

I found it best not to be aligned with any one church or religious affiliation. As soon as we, as community guides, express religious bias or attempt to indoctrinate, we build boundaries. Our aim was

to alleviate the suffering by improving lifestyle, not to 'save souls'. Whereas churches help some people those who choose their own private form of worship, or a traditional connection with the earth and the elements, can be equally as spiritually 'fed'.

Two 'touchy' situations arose in the project regarding religious beliefs:

1) In the Kuku Group one woman had been 'saved' by a particular denomination. She began prostheletizing and praying at each meeting, gradually 'converting' other members. This was causing a rift among the group members. Next she invited her preacher to visit the group, and he demanded that the women give tythe from their chicken project to the church. The women complained to my partner asking for intervention. We decided to keep quiet and see whether the membership could handle it themselves. From the 1989 Log:

> The Kuku Women are now self-sufficient, with two large chicken coops and a market garden. One problem which has developed in that particular group is that a certain religious organization has 'converted' several of the members who are now trying to convince the group to allocate a healthy percentage of their collective income to the religion. We are trying to decide whether to interfere in this problem or let the women sort it out. How responsible should we feel when a project group has gained independence and then are in danger of losing it? I think we will wait and see whether they turn to us for help with this problem (1989 Log).

Shortly afterward we heard from the group leader that the issue had been dealt with and there would be no more 'infiltration', but that each member was free to follow whichever church she wanted as long as it wasn't "peddled in the meetings".

Another incident involved traditional religious rituals. At the centre of the controversy was little Esther, the brain-damaged infant being cared for at the emergency shelter. Suddenly one of

her relatives demanded that the child be taken for a 'cleansing ceremony' in the tribe to absolve the child's young mother from the sin which caused the curse of crippling. I knew very little about the tribal ceremony but was told that the last time one of our handicapped children was taken for this treatment he did not return alive. My partner appealed to a social worker to get a court order protecting the child but she was told that the parents have the right to take the child. Eventually we were able to convince the family to use another form of ceremony and not take the child, but it was a difficult time while we searched for the 'right' answer to the dilemma of religious freedom versus physical safety.

In both these cases we were able to remain 'neutral'. Had we been entering from some particular religious stance we might not have been able to retain our argument that each individual is free to choose their path without unfair manipulation or oppression. Instead we might have been accused of trying to convert the people involved, of having a vested interest in another religious belief.

10. Entering a Slum Environment

Slum society has its own rules. The residents are well known to each other. People of the slums are fearful of strangers, particularly whites. I learned slowly about the dangers of entering a slum area. My partner had not frightened me by telling the stories, so rampant among the elites, of slum violence. She merely allowed me the freedom to join her in her work.

At first my naivete was useful because I was unafraid and full of wonder and excitement. Later, residents of the 'real' society, the 'regular' city dwellers, reacted with horror and amazement that I had been accepted into the slum -- "The hell hole where people disappear".

I realize now that I was being protected by the women we were visiting. Everyone knew who we were and why we were there. Otherwise my presence would have been cause for concern. As well, I did not wear jewellery nor did I carry any valuables. My clothing

was similar to that on my African sisters. I was open and friendly to all the people in the slum. I was not afraid. in fact I never felt fearful in the slum even when those around me expressed fear.

Nevertheless, we entered the slum area only in daylight and made sure the women knew when to expect us. Without their support and protection it would have been dangerous to be so visible in that environment. The emergency Centre, however, is located some distance from the valley and is therefore accessible to strangers.

CHAPTER XI CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter replies to the research questions listed in Chapter I. There is also a brief autobiographical sketch, concluding with a synoptical message to aid agents.

A. Answering The Research Qusestions

The major research questions for this report are as follows: (a) What kind of lessons are learned when women are allowed to articulate their lives? (b) Can the voices of women, particularly those who have been denied a voice in their society, be recognized as the 'experts' in their own development? (c) How might we begin to incorporate the spiritual/emotional aspects of development into community projects? and (d) What kinds of informal education components can arise within a community development project that is guided by women's voices?

(a) What kind of lessons are learned when women are allowed to articulate their lives?

The women of Shadow Valley say that the lessons they want to teach the world are: the story of their reality; awareness of the suffering they must endure on a daily basis; and the hope that poverty can be eliminated and that women of the future need not endure the indignities they themselves have endured. As a result of listening I would offer the following messages: (i) that women's voices carry the stories of relationships in life [with family, friends, men, children, and in community]; (ii) that women's voices do carry different 'lessons' than do those of men [Gilligan, 1988]; and (iii) that the feminine voice is needed in this historical moment to re-balance a world filled with 'yang' energy [Capra, 1982]. This thesis attempts to present not only the voices of women but a view of data collection and data presentation which begins to break the patriarchal rules described by Capra (1982)

(b) Can the voices of women, particularly those who have been

denied a voice in their society, be recognized as the 'experts' in their own development?

Yes, women can be recognized as the experts in their own development. I give my partner full credit for accomplishing this. At every step of the way she recognized the women themselves as the leaders and guides of the process even when she felt that their ideas might result in failure.

> I am the follower not the leader. At times the women have made decisions which could not work. For example a group of Wamathina women borrowed money to begin a small business which I knew would fail. But it was through trying that they realized their mistakes, and they tried again after gathering more information. (Partner's voice recorded 1989)

It takes a great deal of time and patience to allow women in poverty to be the 'experts'. They must first gain sufficient confidence in their own integrity and intelligence. Nevertheless once women grasp the idea that they are in fact capable of being the 'experts' they develop their role well and gather energy through mutual support and collaboration. As 'experts' they have the right to monitor their own development and evaluate the success or failure of each step. Written assessments are not possible in this type of situation unless they are transcribed directly from the actual voices of the women. However, freedom to speak truthfully and openly will depend upon who is listening. I would like to get away from formal assessments and let results speak for themselves. If sad people become happy people, sick children become healthy children, and oppressed persons become free, then a project is in my opinion successful.

(c) How might we begin to incorporate the spiritual/emotional aspects of development into community projects?

In this project the partners were in agreement that every person has a soul and that the soul is affected by the life

experiences. The women of Shadow Valley had suffered so much for so long that their souls seemed almost dead. Love, joy, happiness awakens the soul. A part of our program therefore focussed on providing experiences which offered love, joy, and happiness: celebrating, singing, hugging, laughing, sharing and giving. These can all be included and encouraged in community projects anywhere.

It seemed that my western culture was less spiritually inclined than was the African culture. I learned from the women how to celebrate small successes. Once the women realized that their joyful emotionality and spirituality was an important component of all our meetings they willingly guided the process.

The first step for project facilitators might be to explore aspects of spirituality and emotionality in human development, beginning with their own. It is also important to appreciate emotions as real, healthy, and useful instead of fearful (or signs of weakness) as many women have been told. Allowing women to express pent-up angers and frustrations seems to 'clear the slate' so that they can get past the old feelings and begin new undertakings in their lives without living in the past. In order to accomplish this they must be provided with a safe place surrounded by trusted friends. As well, a process of reassessment and renegotiation with life is helpful to get past any negative energy and replace it with positive energy.

I would recommend that development facilitators be trained in this area before attempting an emotional 'purging' process with groups. However it may prove to be a crucial stage in growth beyond the kind of suffering that the women of Shadow Valley had experienced.

(d) <u>What kinds of informal education components can arise within a community development project that is guided by women's voices?</u>

Informal education components came in many forms in the project. If one person had information that was useful to the group that person became the teacher. Education took place in workshops,

meetings, children's camps, hospitals, and on the streets.

The unique aspect was simply that all learning was related to requests for knowledge by the women themselves. When they discovered a need for information about operating a small business we looked for a resource person with that type of knowledge; when the request came for answers to questions about diseases a nurse was called in; and when agricultural information was needed the women were toured to an agricultural centre. Education was arranged in answer to the requests of our 'experts' (the women), and their assessment of the results became the gauge of success.

This type of education curriculum requires on-going on-site communication. Sometimes all three of the women's groups assembled for a lesson (e.g. planned parenthood) and at other times a group required information specific to their needs (e.g. chicken raising techniques).

Because the lesson content was dictated by the women's specific requests they took responsibility for the outcomes. The attendance rate was excellent and the women took the information back into the wider community. Inter-group learning took place when groups visited each others' projects. (e.g. Kuku women taught Wamathina about chickens, Wamathina taught Kuku group about small businesses, and Gikabu taught the Wamathina women about constructing a building). Inter-tribal lessons were shared when four tribal groups were represented at annual retreats: traditional tribal myths, songs, and dances were explained and taught; questions about birth rites, lifestyles, and taboos were answered; inter-tribal jokes were shared.

B. Autobiographical Sketch

In conclusion I include this autobiographical sketch because it would seem that many women can identify with my 'journey'.

Several of my childhood years were spent in a 'pioneer-type' family who enjoyed 'roughing it' in a log house. There was always a

sense of adventure and exploration. Later, twenty-nine years of marriage, raising four sons, farming, teaching, and community volunteerism offered continual challenge and change. But at mid-life there was need for expansion of vision and learning. For the first time ever I had spare time and spare money. What better way to spend both than in service to those most in need? Unfortunately no one in my family shared my enthusiasm. Nevertheless I was determined to keep my life meaningful, hoping my family would learn to understand; would choose to share my journey; would want to see and hear what would otherwise remain invisible and inaudible to our Canadian eyes and ears. Africa called and I answered.

My 'love affair' with Africa coincided with the collapse of my marriage. Did an unhappy marriage cause the need to escape or vice-versa? -- or, in fact, neither? People grow apart, particularly if they are 'opposites' from the start. There are those who choose to view my search for truth as a threat to social tradition, and others who view a woman's need to grow as just that, freedom to grow. The cost can be enormous and the journey long and lonely; but the alternative, denial of truth, seems impossible to me.

I have learned so much from interacting with the women and children of Shadow Valley. This final writing part, however, has been a test of patience, stamina, and self-discipline. Many times I questioned my own motives for writing a thesis, and nearly gave up on several occasions. However, there was no shortage of honest advice from friends and family:

"Keep going, a Master's degree will improve your employment status."

"No, you are really just wasting your time."

"Yes, the project is worthy of publicity."

"No, your work is too private."

"Yes, you owe it to the women."

"No, it is exploitive of women to write about them."

"Yes, the international community needs to know."

"No, you'd be better off to write a book -- theses just gather dust."

"Yes, you should try to break through the academic restrictive barriers."

"No, it is impossible to speak the truth in academic jargon."

In the end I found that all the above advice was true.

Perhaps the greatest challenge was to keep the original vision in mind throughout all adversity and set-backs. When the vision was first sketched (Appendix A) many people said it was an impossible dream. During each step there were doubters and critics. However my partner and I knew in our hearts that what we had envisioned was what was required and nothing less would suffice.

> I began this project because I believed wholeheartedly in the value of the work to give a voice to those who had been silenced, and to make ripples throughout the slum community. Now I can see those ripples and feel the new positive energy growing. When I reflect on the past few years I can see the 'evolution' process, with all the people in both countries who have impacted and assisted, and who have been affected in some way. . . .
>
> I certainly don't miss the glittery commercialism and T.V. hype of 'rich' Christmases; nor the frantic spending sprees and stress of family politics. Life is right down to basic needs in this work. Seeing the kids' eyes sparkle and twisted limbs straightened and women's burdens lightened really makes my heart soar.
>
> In Partnership,
> Much Love,
> Roz (Dec.1991 letter to friends)

C. Conclusion

I would encourage overseas aid workers to be unafraid of idealism and 'impossible' dreams. When things happen which cloud the vision listen to hear the quiet voice within and clarify the vision. When your energy fades draw on the energy of the universe -- if the vision is based on truth and love the universe gives abundant power.

At this moment (1992) many African countries are under the power of the gun. Our project is in jeapardy, but the children and their mothers have travelled so far that there will be no turning back for them. Even if the emergency shelter is destroyed the spirits of the people cannot be eliminated. I have had the privelege of learning from sisters of immense inner power and wisdom. They will find a way.

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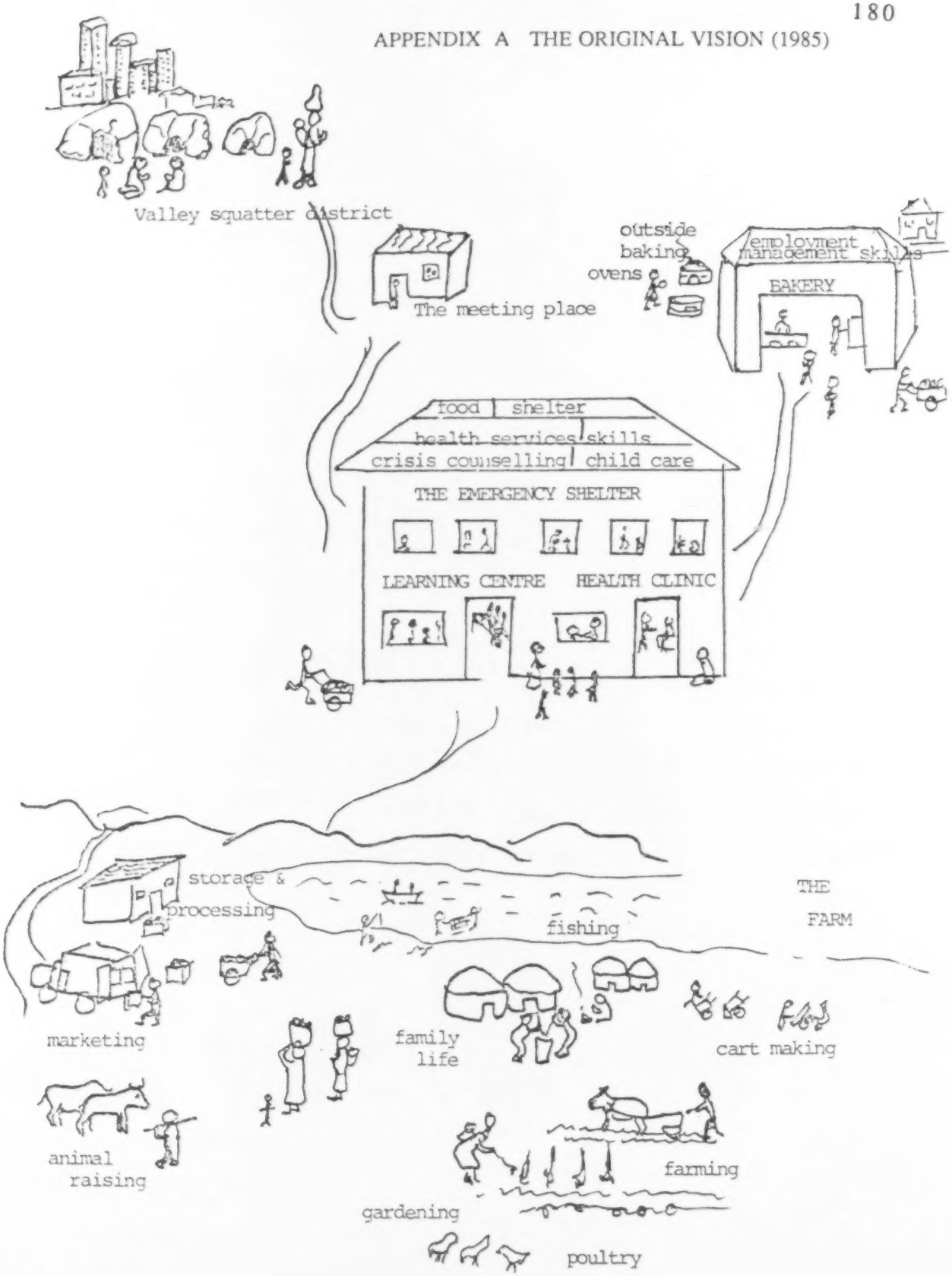
APPENDIX A THE ORIGINAL VISION (1985)



SHADOW VALLEY SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROJECT 1985 - 1990

1985 **UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM**
CANADA / AFRICA PARTNERSHIP

1986/87 **WOMEN'S COOPERATIVES REGISTERED**

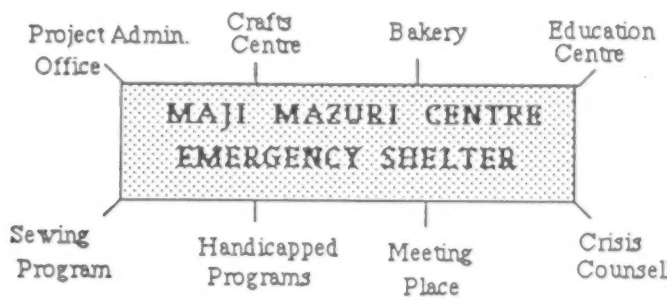
INCOME ⟷ **EDUCATION** ⟷ **FRIENDSHIPS (support systems)**

- INCOME: family support → schooling → access to health services → CONFIDENCE
- INCOME: banking → recording skills → life planning → CONFIDENCE
- EDUCATION: information → skills → creative alternatives → employment → SELF-ESTEEM
- FRIENDSHIPS (support systems): social acceptance → celebrations & rituals → mental health → COLLECTIVE DECISION-MAKING

1987/88 **TRADITIONAL CRAFTS PROGRAMS**

six women's group - valuing traditional cultures, developing skills, generating income

1988/89



1989 **STREET CHILDREN CAMPS PROGRAM**

one weekend per month for one year
safety, freedom, fun, friendship
education, games, prizes, skills
social dramatization, communication
life skills, cooperative community development

1989 **WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP RETREATS**

1990 **EXPANSION AND INTEGRATION OF EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Project Timeline 1985 to 1991

Data was gathered directly during my four on-site visits and indirectly while in Canada (letters, tapes, and reports). Each of the four on-site visits has somewhat different objectives and therefore both the data collected and the methodology was adjusted accordingly.

	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES	DATA
1985 Visit #1	1. To attend the UN Women's Forum in Nairobi as member of IWSI. 2. To learn as much as possible about Africa. 3. To visit small projects in several rural regions.	1. Overwhelmed by the size of international gathering - 14,000 women. 2. Greater understanding of the global issues. 3. Immersion into culture through spending 2 weeks in inter-African groups. 4. Visits to several women's projects sponsored by foreighn agencies. 5. Initial contact with African partner and realized the partnership.	1. Written info from UN Forum re African womens perspectives, international network. 2. Historical and geographical information. 3. Observations and recordings from rural-based programs. 4. First hand experience with partner's street kids.
1986 Partner to Canada	1. Partner to Canada as guest speaker at Africa conference at U of A. "Issues of African Women". 2. Further discussions. 3. Planning for government funding.	1. Planning strategies - map. 2. Voluinteers mobilized in both countries to "launch" the project. 3. Clarification of "development goals". 4. Continual ongoing inter-country correspondence.	1. Project goals clearly defined. 2. Various methods of fundraising researched. 3. Philosophy of service, holistic methods, hearing the voices.
1987 VISIT #2	1. To take supplies and equipment for women's groups. 2. To establish a building for the learning centre and emergency shelter. 3. To observe the women's groups and hear the voices. 4. To interact in whatever way possible to further the work and assist the families. 5. To place books and sewing machines from Canada into programs.	1. Supplies and equipment very useful. 2. Multi-purpose building leased for 3 years. 3. Building unfinished but already in use. 4. Visits to each group. 5. Second-hand vehicle provided. 6. Dealt with issues such as imprisonment, lack of health and education facilities, violence of street life. 7. Expansion of the project to include the Emergency Shelter, learning programs, group counselling. 8. Books allocated, sewing machines lost.	1. Good journals. 2. Documentation re building. 3. Inter-agency documentation. 4. Increased knowledge of slum lifestyle. 5. Recorded interviews. 6. Voices of women's groups and staff. servations. 8. Written reports on educational aspects.

	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES	DATA
1988	1. Expansion of Dev Ed Programs in Canada. 2. Applications for increased funding to support expanded programs in Kenya. 3. Clarification of future plans.	1. Presentation materials designed and produced. 2. Networking with schools, churches, learning centres, agencies. 3. Increased support from personal donations, AAID, CIDA. 4. Partner and I travelled to Holland with 8 street kids. 5. Drama, Music and Song performances at WCCI International Ed conference.	1. Slides compiled and songs and stories to match for public education in Canada - global family theme. 2. Written documentation. 3. Reports and documents to and from funding agencies. 4. Feedback from conference delegates.
1989 Visit #3	1. To take supplies and equipment. 2. To implement improved banking system and record keeping. 3. To assist in all aspects of the program. 4. To facilitate children's camps and a women's leadership retreat.	1. Supplies and equipment insufficient but much appreciated. 2. Banking system immovable. Record keeping improved. 3. Hard work and so little time, transportation difficulties. 4. Two children's camps and one 5-day women's leadership retreat.	1. Very little data on banking system - seems to be tied to politics and big business. 2. Log data not so prolific but lots of tapes and photos. 3. Good data re camps and women's retreat.
1990	1. Exchange Program initiated. 2. Partner arrives in Oct. for inter-agency liason and project analysis.	1. Exchange Program has internal difficulties, funding refused. 2. Partner's visit to Canada successful -- public workshops, private meetings, project planning.	1. Good data re exchange analysis. 2. First hand project reports from participants and staff members.
1991 Visit #4	1. To assess future needs. 2. To determine the states of the project leaders. 3. Finalization of thesis data. 4. To initiate a phase-out process for self-sufficiency and local (rather than international) support systems.	1.Difficulties with in-country travel due to political instability. 2.Women's groups meetings successful 3. Youth drama evolved to point of public presentations	1. Political unrest causing stress on resources (human, financial, physical) 2. Final reports and documents 3. Three proposals to Canada Fund 4. Approval obtained from partner for thesis content.

APPENDIX D. EXAMPLE OF PROJECT REPORT

[AFRICA] SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROJECT
SEPT. 89 REPORT TO AAID/ASP

By Rosalind Van Vliet, Pres.

This was the year of my third working experience in [Africa]. Actually it proved to be somewhat of a 'trial by fire' -- more difficult than the previous times because of the depth and scope of the work, and the intensity of our involvement. The project has become huge, with so many components, and [my partner] and I have stretched ourselves to the limit. This time I contracted a serious eye disease while treating a woman suffering from an infection, and so I completed the scheduled work in a nearly blind condition. Now, fully recovered, I am eager to return to share in the excitement of the next phase. [My partner] is presently on crutches in a full length cast -- she fell while playing soccer with the kids. But she assures me that there is a positive side to all this -- during her recovery she has had time to plan, record, and catch up on the paper work.

Interestingly, two of the key experiences of this year's work seem to be exploding in exciting directions. One was a **women's retreat workshop**. The idea was conceived in the minds of [my partner] and I the year before. We felt strongly that the slum dwellers needed a time of freedom from drudgery, and of celebration of their womanhood, as well as an opportunity to learn new community development skills to carry their group into the next phase. So this year we actually pulled it off! Each of the six women's cooperatives selected two or three representatives from their membership to attend the workshop and teach their own group what they learned. [My partner] and I and sixteen women, (four different tribes) representing two hundred women, and including every age group (plus a tiny handicapped child who had been recently abandoned) left by overnight train for five days at a retreat centre.

I have never witnessed such joy! The women experienced so many "firsts" during that five days -- the train ride, swimming, eating the best parts of a freshly-killed goat in celebration with their "sisters". (Most of them had never been allowed to eat the prime meat because it is strictly 'male' food) They told their life stories amid tears and laughter. I felt so priveleged to be sharing 'sacred' insights, and yet so inadequate to understand all the deeper levels of cultural consciousness. They

discussed leadership, social and economic problems, groups dynamincs, health concerns, traditional values, neo-colonialism, and family problems. They tolc' stories and jokes in four languages, and shared songs and dances. The Kikuyus said they didn't realize Maasai women were so nice, and the Maasais said they never thought they could enjoy sharing living space with other tribes. They all said that this workshop was the highlight of their entire lifetime, and that they had gained new strength to carry on. Now they want an annual workshop so that all the women will eventually have the experience !

The other 'explosion' has ensued from the **monthly leadership camps** which [my partner] organizes for the street kids. I attended two such camps during this visit, and slept on the floor in a hut with the kids. Again the same excitement about escaping from their daily existence in [Shadow Valley]. There was a wide variety of learning programs, discussion groups, and leadership development activities; games of skill and fun, with prizes for all; traditional stories, songs, and dances; but best of all, the most fantastic dramatizations, dealing with the issues the children face daily -- homelessness, hunger, violence, alcoholism, drugs, unemployment. And these dramas, created spontaneously, were humorous, poignant, entertaining, and educational.

When I arrived home I whipped off a quick letter to the World Council of Curriculum and Instruction telling them about the children's social dramatizations. The WCCI responded by phoning me at 2:00 A.M. one night to invite me to bring six of our [African] kids to demonstrate the dramas and traditional dances at the **International Education Conference** in the Netherlands August 5 to 12 (courtesy of the Netherlands Government) . Two hundred delegates were to gather, and the theme was "fine arts in global education". How could I refuse this opportunity for slum children to teach the world?! After a great deal of last minute panic over birth records and visas we all somehow arrived at the Amsterdam airport simultaneously, and two weeks of intensive learning began.

[My partner] and I were like mother hens with our precious chicks. Some of these kids had never seen carpets, flush toilets, table cloths, or bed sheets. Each moment of each day was exciting. We discussed the dehumanizing effects of both poverty and wealth; understanding global relationships; and world wide problems such as family violence, drugs, militarism, and unemployment.

The drama troupe was the highlight of the conference with their wonderful dramatizations, songs, and dances. The messages were powerful and real, and at

the same time entertaining. We proved that kids from the slums can teach high-powered educators about education. Also, the children were able to adapt to all kinds of new experiences, and by the end of two weeks they were speaking English even among themselves (this new confidence in the colonial language renders them more employable in the job market). Beyond that they gained new social skills, and increased their feelings of dignity and self-worth. But our big concern was the re-entry process, and readjustment to their home environment. We had long evening discussions about this, and made sure that the kids not only witnessed the oppulence of Holland but also the back alleys and the social problems. They heard first-hand about the parallel problems of first world countires.

Upon their return a large [Shadow Valley] crowd welcomed them home at the airport. A re-enactment of their Netherlands performance took place at the weekend camp. The six young people are now being encouraged to continue their education, and to take on leadership responsibilities within the project work. There don't seem to be any negative effects due to their 'outside exposure'. New 'doors' and 'windows' have opened for them and we will assist them in their growth. They have a lot of talent and courage.

Meanwhile in other parts of the project the **Centre** sewing courses have expanded and two more second-hand sewing machines have been added (one donated from Canada and the other purchased at a flee market in Amsterdam). The young mothers in the sewing classes have decided to form their own registered cooperative so that they can keep collective records and open a bank account. Three of our participants have now set up an independent sewing business and have been contracted to make some clothing for a retail outlet.

The **Traditional Handicrafts** groups are storing their products at the Centre and learning to market their goods properly. There are also several women and children living in the Centre Emergency Shelter on a temporary basis. They are learning skills which will help them to gain employment.

There are eight **handicapped children** boarding in the Centre and undergoing therapy. A housekeeper cares for the children. Our staff person also cares for them and teaches them. Many of the other [Shadow Valley] families with handicapped children are visited twice weekly by our staff persons. This is not only a therapy program for the children, but an education program for the families and the community as a whole. It is gratifying to see the changes in attitudes toward physical and mental disabilities, and the new interest in handicapped persons as

valued community members. Several of the youth leaders from our youth camps have been helping with the little children at the Centre as a part of their leadership training program.

The oven in the middle of the Centre produces a hundred loaves of bread per day, which is then sold locally. The proceeds go to paying the baking ladies and continuing the **bakery program.** A new bakery is planned, sponsored jointly by Partnership Africa Canada, Change For Children and Awareness Programs Society. The land has been purchased by the Gikabu Women's group, and the women have already begun to dig the foundation.

The Kuku (meaning 'chicken') Women's Cooperative are now self-sufficient, with two large **chicken coops** and a **market garden**. One problem which has developed in that particular group is that a certain religious organization has 'converted' several of the members who are now trying to convince the group to allocate a healthy percentage of their collective income to the religion. We are trying to decide whether to interfere in this problem or let the women sort it out. How responsible should we feel when a project group has gained independence and then are in danger of losing it? I think we will wait and see whether they are able to solve this problem by themselves.

Each of the other five women's cooperatives have developed little projects and group businesses. Most are highly successful. Some groups have greater difficulty than others in keeping their projects 'on track', but in all cases they are happy to be growing and learning and supporting each other. All the groups are expanding their activities. We don't want to be 'baby sitters'. The purpose is empowerment and human resource development, not project imposition or process control.

One part of our earlier proposal plan which we have not implemented is the hiring of a full-time health worker. It is taking longer than we had anticipated to get administative approval to operate a registered clinic, and also to get our electrical and telephone installations, so we have adjusted our approach somewhat, to continue with our less formalized **community health programs and our first-aid station**. Now, a small hospital is being built not far from the Centre and we are hoping to tap into that for some of the services we had planned.

All in all, the Project is thriving ! In fact [my partner] and I, plus the four African project workers, their volunteers, the project participants, and, over here, our Awareness Programs Committee, are all involved in deciding how to revamp our

operation to accomodate the growth of the project. On the one hand our primary objective is to get to the phasing-out point, and on the other hand there are always new things to do. We want to remain small, voluntary in orientation, and also retain our focus with women and children. Our policy has been to involve the women and youth groups directly, and empower them to form networks and to examine alternative strategies for working together. . . .

. . . So many, many people have joined hands with us along the way -- women and men, teens, and even young children. Many Canadians have visited the project sites and offered various kinds of assistance while learning from our African partners . . . (people from Edmonton, Winnepeg, Vancouver, Victoria, Hay River, Toronto and Ottawa). Community organizations, church groups, and agencies have supported our work throughout the five year growth. I expecially appreciate the little groups who showed such caring -- the Onoway Anglican women, the B'hai group in Spruce Grove, the Unitarian congregation, the Village Well (New Sarepta), the Spruce Grove High School class who provided 'dollars for chickens'. Now new people are coming into the circle. I hope they receive joy and life-meaning through linking with us. They won't be spoon-fed or even thanked properly for their efforts. Everyone is free to come and share when it is right for them, and free to exit for the same reason. We are all connected; our lives are interwoven; and our spirits are one.

I am grateful for the lessons I have learned by laughing and crying with the hundreds of 'teachers' in my life. This work has forced me to grow. Teaching and learning self-sufficiency seems to be my life task, within my immediate family as well as in my global family.

APPENDIX E EXAMPLES OF PROJECT CORRESPONDENCE

June 18,1988.Dear [Partner], [Wambui], and [Charles],

Greetings to all of you, and to the women's groups. I was listening to the tapes of their voices this week, and it made me cry. I wish I could be there .

Thanks for sending the children's school reports. It is nice to give extra recognition to those in school, but I also worry about those who can't be in school - - many of them are just as smart, just as hard-working, and just as deserving of some kind of recognition. I wish we could open a home/school for those who have lost their parents, and maybe that should be a long-term objective for the Project.

The newspaper articles are very useful. The buldozers article indicates to Canadians some of the problems [Shadow Valley] faces. How many houses did they knock down this time, and where did the people go to?

Jennifer and I gave our project presentation last night at the Unitarian Church. I showed slides and invited people to get involved by sponsoring individuals or families, writing letters to the women's groups, etc. There was a good group of about 25 people, mostly women. I also had typed out the exact words of the Wamethina women that I taped during that first session with them. There were 10 quotations, and so 10 people from the audience got a quotation, and read the words while I showed the slides of the Wamethina group. It was very effective because it was the women's own words telling their story. Everyone enjoyed it, and felt closer to the women.

I received your June 7 letter yesterday. I am very sad to hear about the death of [George]. He seemed to have so much energy it seemed as though he would live forever. It must have been a terrible shock to you. I am very sorry.

Thankyou for sending the crafts through Magugu. I have not received them yet because Ruse will not be back from the reunion until Sunday. The other crafts are almost all sold now, and I have enquired about getting matching funds through the government. We need to submit a new proposal for the new funds, so Jennifer and I are working on it. We will be able to send the money to you by the end of June I hope, then the women will be able to put it into their account

Please tell the Gikabu Group that I am very happy about their new bank account. Who is their treasurer? The woman who teaches bookkeeping is Pat B. She will be in [Africa] on July 26, and will contact you. She is not sure how much

time she will have, but she will bring a new ledger book for the office, plus some new ideas to make bookkeeping more efficient.

I prepared the interim report for CIDA and sent it to them. There are some new people in charge of the office in Camrose now. Apparently the new project officer is from Gaana. It will be good to have some African input. I have not received any official word yet whether we will receive our next funds for the project. My main problem was that I could not give them an accurate budget outline because I have not yet received the copies of the ledger pages from you. Have you been able to keep up that job? Can you send the copies of the pages? These hoops are ongoing and the regulations drive me crazy because I am not sufficiently logical or analytical.

I hope it is possible to get those sewing machines released. Both the Bahai group and the Anglican group are very anxious to hear about the machines because of all their letters, photos, and of course all the sewing supplies they put in. I will do as you suggested and forward a letter to the P.C. omitting the one paragraph.

Regarding the vehicle, I am sorry you have been unable to find one at the right cost. Actually, I did budget $7,000. But I don't think I can get any additional funds for the vehicle. If we get the new funds in Sept. they will have to be allocated for the next years rent of the Centre, the staff salaries, and the Training programs, according to the contract. The vehicle will have to match the project and be overworked and ancient.

I hope the Centre is being well used by now. Have you moved to the Centre yet? Are the roads O.K. now? There will be some tourists coming in September, who will be able to come to the Centre to buy crafts and see the programs. Their eyes and ears are always opened by what they see and hear from the women and kids.

It looks as though Maggie has been accepted by Canada for the tour. Are there any problems with visa, etc. Now we have to get her assigned to Alberta so that she doesn't go to some other province. It will be wonderful to have her here. I will find her some warm clothes because it will be quite cold here at that time of year.

Please ask Charles to take some pictures of the street children because I have to do a presentation on street children at the University on July 5. If you have any good information that you would like me to present please send it quickly. It could lead to some new awareness.

Congratulations to Wambui. Her typing is excellent. Please keep the wonderful correspondence coming. I share your news with many people.

* * *

September 4, 1988.
Dear [Partner],

I am sending this letter with Patricia and her husband and nurse friend.

I hope all is well with you. You must be very very busy. [. . .] phoned to say that the lady from Toronto could not meet you because you were so busy in meetings. She said the photo album was left with a friend of yours. Did you finally get it? I hope so. Your life is probably also more complicated if your son is now living with you permanently. It is wonderful to have children, but there is no doubt that they take a great deal of time and energy, particularly when you have lived a comparatively independent life. How are things going? Are you O.K. my dear sister?

Pat phoned today from Hay River, which is way up North in Eskimo country. She said she enjoyed meeting the women very much, and was very impressed with them. She said they are "beautiful ladies", so please tell them that. Pat did not feel that she had enough time to work with you, and she was sad that she did not even see the Centre. She is going to mail your papers and photos to me right away. I am anxious to receive them. Is there any money left in the account? Pat said it looks as though there is none left. Did you finally get a vehicle, or did the money run out ? I need to know so that I can plan at this end to keep things running for you. Don't be afraid to tell me the problems as well as the high points. I am not bad at mind-reading, but not from 13,000 miles away !!

[. . .] has promised to try to get the sewing machines released. She has relatives in [. . .] who might be able to talk to some key officials. I sure hope it is possible. I have a young woman who is interested in teaching sewing once we have machines in the Centre. She could come in February. There are great possibilities when the need is so great.

I am including in this letter a copy of the letter I sent at the beginning of August because all those questions are still on my mind. I know how busy you are so I thought that I would send the letter again because the other one might have got

lost, or else you might not have had time to read it in detail. I have not heard whether you received the craft money from Jennifer, and we have decided it is best to send the next craft funds after the last funds have been safely distributed, so that the women can learn to manage the moneys successfully in their groups.

I am trying to be very specific in my letters because correspondence takes so long, and so many people here are waiting to hear all the latest news.

I am very worried about the Centre because maybe it has become too much of a burden for you, or maybe you have become involved in professional counselling at the College, or other important work. So please be candid about the situation and let me know what is really going on. I feel responsible to all the Canadians who have supported the work, and it is so difficult to guess how to proceed.

I am feeling that David and Christine will definately require your guidance if their work is to be effective. Will that work out O.K. or do we need to make other arrangements? Will you have time for these things, or not? These people have so much energy and knowledge to give, but they will need an interpreter and lots of guidance. They are very hard workers, so will be good role models for the young men in [Shadow Valley]. Is Mary still free to work beside them, or is she now involved in other directions?

Please try to find time for Patricia if possible. She needs to take lots of photos of the Centre, and whoever is using it. Also of the women making their kiondos, and the children. Her nurse friend can give some good advice about a Health Clinic facility. She might even be able to find a lockable refrigerator for you.

I must admit that I am wondering whether I should come to [Africa] in December, as soon as I have finished the two University courses I am enrolled in. It would certainly be a meaningful Christmas to spend it with the women and children at the Centre. I could help to set up the programs, the Health Clinic, etc. This time I would stay about three months, using the Centre as home base. I have been asked to go to Tanzania as well to meet some women's groups. What do you think? Do you really want to gear up these programs over the next year or are you too busy with other things? How should we proceed? What is your timeline, and what kind of budget are we needing? Am I imposing a Western process for the work by sending all these poeple over there, or are they useful to you? Should we phase out and back off, or proceed full steam ahead? How do you suggest we keep the project funds safe so that they will be available for paying next year's expenses, including next year's rent? When crises are happening all the time it is too difficult to avoid

spending the money. Maybe I should send over a bit at a time. Or would you prefer that we transfer it all over into a trust account or something?

Could you send a budget for the next year over? I realize you have other funds coming in now. That is good. We will be able to continue with the craft cooperatives even so, and many people are interested in continuing.

* * *

Feb. 27, 1989.
Dear [Partner],

I hope that the timing is good and that you and Ann M. have managed to coordinate and meet together. She sounded very happy to be able to meet with the women and see what you are doing. She is quite a remarkable lady, I think, though I have never met her. I am sending this package by express post to Vancouver so that she can take it to you, so please let me know that you received it safely.

I have included several bundles of information:

1) a copy of the grant application to Alberta Small Projects (CIDA) so that you will know their expectations of the project work, and how the funds are to be allocated, and also Awareness Programs expectations. Please let us know your reactions to all this.

2) information about the Grameen Bank methods of loans for small enterprises for the poor. It may be possible to introduce this for the women's cooperative businesses. The Calmeadow Foundation (U.S.A.) has used these methods in several developing countries. I hope you can find time to read through all this -- it is very interesting and practical.

3) the latest newsletter about the project activities, and other written information for you to use when you introduce the project in the Philippines.

4) a cheque for craft sales. There is one more cheque to come. We were able to match the craft monies in our grant proposal, by the way. We are very happy about that. So now we just have to wait til they make a decision. Your tape etc. will help a lot.

I am still uncertain about when I can come. As soon as I hear definitely about the funding then I will feel comfortable about putting the next phase into place.

If you have already signed and posted the declaration paper I mailed to you for signing we might get word quite quickly, and I will come in April. If so, could we do that retreat for some of the women leaders for a few days? My first priority will be to fix up the Centre, and I would even like to stay there if that is possible. Please let me know if there are supplies which I should be bringing with me for the Centre -- what is needed most?

The new land sounds interesting, and the farm was a part of our original vision! -- but I had to ask you some questions about it because I have to try to explain all these ideas to the people here who are working so hard to keep the funds coming in for the project. And as you can realize, when it is government-assigned money we are obliged to explain in concrete terms. The first question here when it comes to property is legal ownership, building regulations, etc.

Everyone here is waiting for more crafts to sell -- if Ann's group can bring some I will arrange for them to be picked up in Vancouver. But you could also try posting some in small boxes, particularly batiks, the animal necklaces, and banana-leaf people. It is wonderful that this is benefitting the project so much while teaching Canadians.

Regarding your school fee problem, Lois has suggested that we discuss the idea of a school bursay program, whereby certain candidates would be chosen, on the basis of academics and community service, to receive school bursaries. In return they would be expected to assist others and keep up their marks. I will ask Lois to write up a proposal for you on this idea. The women's groups could select their own recipients and be fully involved.

For the loans programs we can get some good ideas from the information I have enclosed. Of course, bookkeeping is the key to success in all this. If we get our funding is there someone to hire that could do this. Wambui was so meticulous, is she still available? What happened to her?

Keep the correspondence open, dear sister. I will phone whenever possible but our letters are crucial. It is hard for me to be doing the paper work when I really want to be there with all my African family. Isn't it amazing how far we have come and how much difference women's empowerment can make?

Lots of love to all.

* * *

Nov. 89.

Dear [Partner],

I hope that your leg is completely mended by now. I am glad that you managed, in spite of your physical restrictions to meet with so many people regarding the direction of the project work. Yes indeed you and I have come a long way since 1985, and our partnership has affected many lives. I wish we had time to discuss together all the alternative ways of proceeding, but we must instead try to communicate on paper which takes time. Thank you for your long and detailed letter. It is so helpful when you write everything like that because it helps me to understand what your main concerns are and what you feel are the priorities for my attention.

It is good that you have made so much effort to enquire about process and procedure regarding the expansion of the project. I can't yet give you the consensus of opinion from my committee because we have not met to discuss your four suggestions, but I will let you know what they say. Maybe we can make a tape to send. It seems to me that all the things we have accomplished so far would not have happened if we had been waiting for 'official' approval from all the levels of government, the churches, large NGO's etc. Speaking personally, I am not interested in being dictated to by any politicians, beaurocrats, or church patriarchs.

Let's look specifically at each part of the project:

1) We have the women's Groups - **Kuku** are now independent and so we don't need to fund them any more. However I realize they need on-going contact and encouragement.

Gikabu are going to do their bakery. The proposal has been forwarded to PAC but a letter from you explaining the need for quick action would be helpful ! Please let me know whether Rose is still baking and whether the Centre Bakery is still in operation, and are there still problems with supplies of wood , flour, etc.

Wamethina Women still need a lot of direction and a lot of help. I don't fully understand what they want or expect. But I do realize that they are the most diverse and the most needy group. What are their plans? How often do you want to work with them? Is it possible to schedule regular weekly meetings? Would it be practical for them to meet somewhere safer than [Shadow Valley]? And are they cohesive enough to work together on a project or is it best to encourage their little

group businesses? I would like to receive a proper analysis of their membership, their various projects and the rate of success or failure, a synopsis of the various types of fundings that have been allocated to their groups, and a realistic plan of action coming from their own membership. Is that possible? It would help me to ascertain the present situation and give me some idea of where you want to go with that group.

Now I can see the spirit of the Kikuyu woman much more clearly. If we could only share that spirit more globally -- and maybe that is one of the things that our exchange program will do. What do you see as our future involvement there?

The two Masai groups have added an important dimension through their willingness to interract with us. We will continue to help them to market their crafts, but our funds cannot really be stretched too far with regard to projects outside [Shadow Valley]. Also it is hard to keep various individual and group projects going unless there is someone constantly monitoring and managing during the initial stages. But if they can be helped on an intermittant basis to keep records, bank their funds, continue their craft marketing fairly, and communicate with other women's groups I think they will progress. Is that an accurate assessment in your view? Is it realistic to program regular monthly meetings with them? Or is that too difficult for them because of the demands on their time within their families?

It is nice that you were able to tour the women to each other's project to let them compare activities and share experiences. You are so good at that sort of thing.

2) The second part of the work is the **Centre.** It has developed in a different way than I had originally envisioned. Due to the distance factor, lack of transportation, telephone, and electricity, some of the originally planned activities have not been possible. And now that a second level is being built the activities may be changed again. But I need to know what your long-range plans are for the Centre.

3) The handicapped program is growing, according to your letter. There are more and more people needing this service. But our staff is not really qualified to handle these children so further training will be required at some point. And our project proposal does not even include the handicapped program as yet. How should I be thinking about this?

I keep thinking about the kids who accompanied us to Netherlands, and hoping that their experiences have helped them rather than hindered them. I guess I

am afraid of consequences of freeing these kids from [Shadow Valley] unless we can support them psychologically through the transition. Please let me know exactly what is happening with each of those kids as they move to direct their lives. I feel that our bursary funds should help those who are in school (Anne, Paul, and Joyce) to continue their education, and they in turn help themselves and others within the project programs. I was happy to hear from Anne. How is Njeri doing? Have you been able to identify a learning and/or employment program to fulfil her needs?

And how is James doing? Is he still living at the Centre? I am really wondering about him. Has he been able to keep the drama group together? I am happy to hear that Ryan was able to fit into the program so well. He is indeed a remarkable young man. I will be anxious to hear all about his experiences when he returns in December.

Do both the sewing machines work alright? Have you had any trouble with them? It is good news that the sewing ladies are stepping out of the centre into their own business. Are they managing O.K? Where is their business? It is good that you have had regular meetings with the Centre residents to clarify the rules and regulations.

Your registration form for the parents of the handicapped children looks fine to me. It can be changed as the program changes if you find that you need different kinds of information about the kids. I am glad that you have found a good 'house mother' for the children. I think about Esther so often and wish I could care for her since her mother doesn't care about her.

Is Charles doing a good job of keeping the administaration of the Centre running smoothly? He has so much to learn about running and office, but perhaps he could go to the library and get some books to read on the subject. He is always very willing to learn.

* * *

Dec. 2, 1989
Dear [Partner],

Smiles and hugs to you and [W], your parents, 'my' Holland kids, the women's groups, and all those special friends in [Shadow Valley]. Your last two letters were very 'up' and enthusiastic about the projects, full of energy, and also

very flattering to me. Thank you for saying such nice things about my involvement, it makes me feel very happy that you are pleased with the way things are happening, but there is so much more to do.

I have not received the letter you refer to, which I presume is the package you mentioned on the telephone that you sent with a woman from England. It sounds as though that was a particularly important package, so please try to duplicate the important information, particularly regarding the last funds I sent and the balance left from the funds I brought in April. Also a record of what the funds have been spent on, and an estimated budget for the next three month period. I am trying to fulfil the requirements set out by my committee and the Canadian funding agencies.

Your letter from Pakistan certainly surprised me. Wow, what a jet-setter. It is interesting to hear that everyone at the international conferences wants a step-by-step outline of our 'process' for project development. They don't realize how unorthodox we are. If we had waited for funding before going ahead, as many people do, we would never have got started. It has been because both of us believe in answering immediate needs immediately that things get done. And we listen and watch before imposing our own solutions. Also it is important to be very brave and not focus on our own safety or our own needs, but to concentrate on the needs of others and answer those needs with a lot of love and courage. Of course, both of us also have stepped beyond the kitchen role, and broken a few cultural rules, in our determination to follow our conscience. Even our own families and closest friends cannot understand why or how we work so hard.

I agree that we get over-stretched and we must focus. Always there are new ideas coming into view and more persons in need, so we jump in. I guess we will have to curb our enthusiasm and concentrate on completing what we have started first.

I was happy to hear that you have decided to cut back on the volunteer committees and dedicate more time to the project work. Everyone needs your assistance so much and it is difficult to choose where to give the most time and energy. I will be anxious to hear from Ryan all the news. I am wondering if he made it back from Sri Lanka in time to be at the Nov. Camp. I asked Kibake to let me know the organizational strategy for the camps starting in January. If you are going to work with a totally new group, how will they be registered,etc.? Does he have a tentative year-plan?

Enclosed is the next installment of funds. Each time funds are sent please let me know immediately that you have received them safely. If the answering machine is on just leave a message for me to call you . Your suggestion of setting a monthly date to phone is a good one, but somehow we might get mixed up, particularly if we are away travelling. However, I will try to call on the last Sunday of each month at about 9:30 P.M. your time -- is that a good time? When I phoned last week there was a girl who could not speak English so she could not understand me at all.

Thank you for including the report on the women in the sewing program. I am always interested in hearing about the individuals in the programs because I can 'see' their faces in my memory. However, when I show this kind of report to my committee they want to know other kinds of information, such as, "How is the program organized? How many sewing machines are in operation? How many women are in the program? How much does it cost to run the progam per month? How long do the participants spend to learn how to sew? Are there different levels of expertise? Do they get some kind of certificate so that they can gain employment? Are we teaching them English so that they are more employable? How many hours a day does the program run? How long are the women staying at the Centre? How can they afford to buy their food and clothing, etc? How much do we pay the sewing instructress?" and many other such questions! So you can see that the women here are very interested in what is happening and very caring about the progress of all the participants. Maybe it would be a good exercise in reporting for Charles to answer these questions and send to me.

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Jan. 5, 1990 (Africa to Canada)
To My Dear Sister Rosalind,

I hope you are well and putting lots of energy into your life goals despite the fact that you are going through a difficult time. Your letter is always very empowering to us particularly the way you keep on encouraging each and every one of us to carry on. The image you have built in our lives can never be forgotten. When I look at the eyes of those children at the centre I see you then David and Christine and Charles and Penina. The amount of effort that was put in to get this programme started. When I see the women sitting outside their newly constructed

building I think of the Rocky Mountain where you and Tillie and I were once sitting discussing our dreams as we overlooked at the lake. When I see the Maasai women group I see you and me sitting at Maria's house surrounded by the women talking about beads -- then another picture of us all sitting under the tree. A picture of us with the women at the retreat keeps on coming back to listen to the echo of their voices narrating sad stories of their lives. You have been such a bridge to all what is happening that through you many people have realized the difficulties and suffering of the women and children. Many people have known another side of [Africa] apart from the tourism image they see all the time. The women here have learned so much of another world Canada and they have established friendships. You bring sunshine to many of us so do never keep it away from your self. Out of love sincerely that you have for the people many lives have been changed and become meaningful. Many women and youth keep asking when you will come again. They thought you were coming in April. In this letter I will try to give you various reports of what is happening.

(1) Tomorrow will be a camp day which fell over a time when we have a long weekend. Every body is so excited to an extent that we do not know how we will cope with the number because of the demand. Each year we try to have a new group to give others the opportunity to participate. We will try this weekend to figure out how we will finally manage that. We also have our youth undergoing through counselling and preventive methods on AIDS because this is becoming a major problem particularly in [Shadow Valley]. I have therefore designed this training curriculum attached where all staff at the centre and youth volunteers are going through the course to help them develop skills. So far the response is very good because everbody is scared because they have now started to see the people they know die. Each time I will add new methods and new information.

Something also very exciting about this camp is the disabled children will all attend plus the cook. We shall have a watchman for the centre over the whole long weekend. Our May camp will be held at the centre and we intend to go hiking, teaching and training because it will be more of youth counselling. Everyone will sleep at the centre. We have requested a few women from the groups to assist us in cooking. There is now very good facilities that we can easily hold seminars and workshops without feeling congested.

(2) We still have heavy rains - lots of terrible floods and many people left homeless. Some parts of the rural areas you can see huts flooded in water and cows

and goats perishing. Bridges being destroyed and making it very difficult to communicate, and isolating a large group of people. Here in [Shadow Valley] cooking pots are floating in the houses.

(3) It is sad that we had to lose Ngugi - it is one thing that my mind still has refused to accept that it did happen. He was such a loving person. It is so sad that thousands of young people are dying around the world due to one reason or another. His mother just had another baby boy last week (thirteenth child). It is so difficult for me to think or plan anything without seeing him in the picture. As for Ngugi I believe we did everything we could have done but with all other feelings he had about his home and the family grief was difficult for him to cope with. This business of belief in curses is tricky. Problems of developing nations can be so frustrating to a person from a developed nation where systems cater for certain things, while for us here one has to struggle from each step to the next. For example when I think of Arthur, the boy who you and I took to the hospital with Esther, and the way we struggled with the bananna and the cup of milk. The attitude of the mother toward her child was so negative and the boy died.

Esther's mother never did get married. It is her grandmother who is the cause of the 'curse' on Esther. Meanwhile we have been visiting the house regularly. We find the mother once in a while but she often disappears for three good days. We are watching the situation through Esther's aunt who is a barmaid and has three children who live in the same house with Esther. I have even gone to an extent of trying to offer her support so that she can take care of Esther. I brought in a children's development officer for a visit to see if they could assist but they said there is no evidence of a child being mistreated. Rosalind I can tell you that some days I walk up and down feeling like bursting -- trying to struggle with not issues but systems.

(4) I am happy about our progress work in crafts. Thus the women have now learned to take criticism about what they produce in a more positive way than personalizing it the way they used. to. I decided to be in charge of that department of coordinating crafts while training Hanna and Jim to carry on because the women bring things of poor quality and they do not know how to reject something for fear they might hurt the women's feelings. During this camp Jim was teaching batics. Our Maasai women are still working closely with us. Tuesday of two weeks ago they brought beads to my house. We then went through other things with I had brought from Zambia and Philippines for them to see what is going on in other parts

of the world. It was easy for them to come because they teamed up with Utaana women to come over. Now that we have lots of rain in that area we have to leave a car and walk quite a distance and it takes almost the whole day to organize and make arrangement for meetings.

My dear sister I will stop here although there is much more to tell. I could go on and on. I wish we could be somewhere sitting and talking without worry of telephone costs. I always feel so nice to bounce my thinking to you. You and I can talk and talk without feeling tired or running out of things to discuss.

Life has many phases. The phases of you being someone's daughter and a playmate of the neighborhood; a teenager, then a wife; a mother and then a grandmother; a married woman then a separated women; a career women and a housewife. The important thing is how we can cope with any of these while we are going through it and then come out with our head high. It is not bad to fall, what is bad is if we loose the strength to wake up and stand again.

Lots of Love from
Your African Sister

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